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THE WILD SWANS

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THE WILD SWANS

*and other Tales
based on the Ancient Irish*

By
ETHEL MANNIN

Illustrated by
ALICE JARROLD



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My dear friends have not given up
Fighting in company, together when you will,
I stand upon their side.

W. B. Yeats

For
T.M.

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For the idea of retelling these ancient Irish tales in modern terms I am indebted to my friend Elizabeth Ryan.

R.M.

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THE WILD SWANS

Based on
The Children of Lir



THE WILD SWANS.

I. FINTLA.

IT WAS said of Michael Byrne that he married the eldest of the three Ryan girls because he could have had any of them, Eva or Anna or Maria, and as they were all three much alike, deep-browed and broad-hipped, suggesting a capacity for easy child-bearing, and strong in the arm and back, as is required of women who must hoe potatoes and carry hay as well as bake bread and tend the house, and as all three had, into the bargain, thick dark hair, clear eyes, and mouths made for kissing—as, in short, there was little to choose between them, he pleased the family and satisfied a certain sense of decorum, by marrying the eldest, Eva.

He married her in the big church in the prettiest town and took her back to live with him in his cottage

among the hillside of the mountainous land above Lough Shan, which meant Lake of the Fairies, and which is in Connacht. In the first year of their marriage she gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl. Michael was so delighted that he called them Hugh and Finola, after the legend of the Children of Lir, who were of the People of Eanna, who came to be called the Shan, or the Fairy Folk, and who were Lords of Ireland in those old, old far-off days when fairies walked the earth and magic was a commonplace.

For five years there were no more children, and then again Eva gave birth to twins, boys this time, and died in childbirth. Michael called them Phobraig and Rannin; he was weighed down by his loss and no longer had heart for fanciful ideas of ancient tales.

The second of the Ryan girls, Anna, came to look after the house and children. After a while it seemed to Michael she having Eva about the place again. Her face and figure were so much Eva's, and her movements, and even her voice, so that it began to seem unnatural that at night she should go off into one room to sleep and be to another. He began to be awake in his lonely bed, thinking about her, and by the end of the year he had married her.

In the year before her marriage Anna had cared affectionately and sympathetically for her dead sister's children, but with her marriage a change began to take place in her. She now had a right to children of her own; and when they did not happen, and hope began to fail in her, she began to resent Eva's children.

Then, increasingly, it was Finola who nurtured the two little boys, and here was all the maternal love and tenderness their childhood knew. Their father scorned them because their birth had taken their mother from him.

Within a few months of his second marriage he discovered that Anna was not the woman Eva had been; she had a streak of hardness in her—of cruelty, even. Whereas Eva had been all gentleness and loving kindness, but for that eternal pair of wings she would be with him still, he would think, and the realization that his movements against them was unreasonable did not trouble him. He did, quite simply, wish, suddenly, that they had never been born.

Hugh was the only child for whom he felt affection. Freda, being a girl, was of no use to him; his need was for a son to help him work the rough steep land which sloped down to the estuary—always referred to as 'the Bay'—where the lake flowed out to the Atlantic. The Belmont sitings stood, with some half-dozen similar cottages, on a peninsula which had the lake estuary on one side of it, and the estuary of the town river on the other. The two estuaries converged at the headland of the peninsula and flowed out to the sea some way out beyond a natural breakwater of small scattered islands. In wild weather the waves of the Atlantic breakers far out could be heard, and their white line was always visible leaping against the cliffs and round the islands, and breaking over the numerous half-submerged molting rocks. A narrow lane twisted its way between stone walls and bushy hedges across the peninsula, past the cottages, and down to a narrow-strewn fordham and a broken jetty known as 'the quay'.

On Saturdays stunted women and portly men roved in with fish and raw vegetables from the islands; they came in black-carts, which, when heaved, looked like great snails. They tied up at the jetty and walked up over the peninsula and down to the main road and on

into the town two miles away. Some of them rowed up the second estuary and tied up at the town quay, but at low tide there was always the chance of getting stuck on mud banks, whereas there was always enough water at the peninsula jetties—and a possibility of disposing of their fish and vegetables before they even reached the town. In the evening they returned with sacks of flour and packets of tea and sugar, and as like as not the men would be merry with the porter drunk in numerous dark little bars at the backs of the shops in the town, so that their progress along the peninsula road by the path of the sunset was a lively procession of singing and of uneven steps and strong head laughter. In the wild winter weather, when the island people did not come in, the peninsula people were, as they said, 'hardly after them'.

Hugh's earliest memory was of driving down to the beach, standing up in the donkey-cart driven by his father, to collect sea-weed for manuring the land; and of driving inland to some marshy land and cutting rushes for bedding for the four cows. There were great expeditions, too, away from the peninsula altogether, across the main road, and tramping along a stony heath that finally gripped out into a wilderness of bog. That the bog reached to the end of the world you could see for yourself, for it flowed away, with its black turfsacks, and its countless small pools that reflected the sky's blue, and its deep-water-filled ditches, to where earth and sky met. From such expeditions the donkey-cart would return piled high with the black and brown coils of turf, and Michael walking at one side of the donkey, and young Hugh at the other.

From the time he could toddle Hugh liked to be out on the land or off to the bog with his father. Finola, who

loved Hugh more than anyone in the world, would watch them silently from the back of the house and long to be with them; but they did not want her in their man's world; her place was in the house, doing women's things with Anna, whose indifference to her when she was a child developed into a cold jealousy of her when she grew into a wildly beautiful young girl.

When Finola was sixteen Anna was in her middle thirties and her jealousy of her step-daughter was intense to the point of hatred. She could not endure it on Sundays when they went into the town together for Mass and all the corner-boys, loitering on the wall outside the church waiting to escape into the park for the Canon of the Mass, had eyes only for the slender red-haired Finola. She was tired of people in the shops remarking to her what a lovely girl Finola had become. It was very bitter to her, this continual tribute to her sister's daughter, when she herself was barren. She was convinced that if she had had a daughter she would have put Finola completely in the shade. She also resented the homage paid to youth. Was not she, at thirty-five, a good-looking woman—the better-looking, she was certain, than Finola would be at that age?

She did not resent Hugh's looks, though they were as striking as his sister's; on the contrary she looked on them with a kind of passionate tenderness. He was dark, like herself, a Ryan rather than a Byrne, so that it was easy to forget that he was her husband's son. For him she had always a smile and a soft word; he could do no wrong in her eyes, just as Finola could do no right.

She nagged the girl incessantly, found fault with all she did, worked her from morning till night and then

assured her of business that she did not do more. But whenever Pucka thought of leaving home the problem of the little boys would present itself to her. She was all they had; Anna had no love for them; what would become of them if she, who was all the mother they had ever known, went off and left them? But when they were no longer children, but able to fend for themselves, then certainly she would go—even though it meant saying good-bye to Hogn. When she thought this a deep sadness enveloped her; it seemed true, as she had read once in a book of poems, that there was "more weeping in the world than you could understand".

Then there was the day when, under orders from his step-mother, Kusan was coming across the field at the back of the house with an armful of washing gathered from the bushes and moss walls where it had been spread out to dry. The dog had come leaping out to meet him, had jumped up at him, and maddened the washing with his paws. When Kusan came into the house with the maddened washing Anna flew at him in a rage, hitting him about the head, watching the washing from him and pummeling him about the body, and the more he protested that it wasn't his fault, that the dog had leapt up at him, the harder she beat him. Patsung, who was a little smaller than his wife, and of a timid disposition, was trilled out of the house, sobbing wildly, and calling for Pucka.

Pucka, who had been taking a can of tea down to Hogn and her father having potatoes on the slope, heard him from a way off, and her heart quickened with fear. His voice ringing towards her with a wild wailing of woe and an hysterical weeping.



"... called her *Plants* after the legend of the *Children of Lir*."

"She's hating Eamon," he sobbed. "She's hating him with her own hands, and it wasn't poor Eamon's fault! "Twice Fint jumped up to him with his muddy feet. Don't let her hate him! Make her stop! She's hurting him, and I can't hear it! I can't hear it!"

He clung to her, his arms round her waist, his face buried in her dress, shaking with his grief and terror.

She ran her hands through his hair distractedly.

"It's all right," she said. "Come now—we'll go into the house. It's all right. Will ye stop wearin' now? 'Tis all right, I tell ye!"

"It's not all right," He shook her dress in his frenzy. "Our poor Eamon! She's hating him!"

"Come now!"

Fiona gripped the child's hands and pulled him along beside her, sliding over the rough boundary land to the house.

In the kitchen Eamon was sobbing violently in a corner and repeating over and over again that it wasn't his fault. His face flushed and her hair dishevelled from the fury of her attack on the boy, Anna was trying to rub the muddy marks out of the damp shoes. She glanced at the girl entering with the still sobbing Patrick.

"Is it the other one is wearin' now?" she demanded, strongly. "Will I hate him too, the little devil?"

Instinctively Fiona put a protective arm round the boy's shoulder.

"You'll have to hate the life out of me then," she said, her voice tremulous not with fear but with indignation. "Aren't you very bold to be hating an innocent child, all ye have the pair of them wearin' themselves here now? Will ye blame us the pair of them, the innocent?"

"There to them, is it? Aunt's I declared with the pair of them? Aunt's I long declared with the whole bunch of them heard? Why won't ye clear out, for God's sake, and take them with ye? 'Tis a bit of peace I'd have, then, maybe."

Finola's arms tightened round the child's shoulder.

"We'll go," she said quietly. "We'll go this very evening. The next morning will be too late" the boys were and maybe give us a lift."

Edward, who had stopped walking to listen to the conversation rushed across the room to his sister, clinging to her as his twin clung on the other side. She put her two arms round his shoulder, and it came to Anna that with an arm round each child the girl was like a mother bird, with wings spread over her fledglings, and something in her was touched with remorse and a kind of pity, but she said only, harshly, "Ye can take a lift to the devil, and welcome, the lot of ye!"

Finola turned without a word and went up the stairs to the loft, where the children slept with Hugh. She put their few things together into two bundles, and when she came down the stairs, with the children, Anna, who was still standing at the kitchen table rubbing at the sheets, did not look up. Finola went with the children into her own room and packed her few clothes into the straw basket which was in two halves and when full was fastened with an old strap. In addition to her clothes she packed her few personal possessions—a photograph of her mother in an imitation silver frame, her mother's rosary beads, a Sacred Heart medalion, a blue and white plaster Blessed Virgin, and a string of red and blue glass beads which her Aunt Maria had sent her the previous Christmas.

When she came back into the kitchen Anna looked up from the nice bath of new scrubbed and wrung-out sheets.

"There's bread and a bottle of milk," she said, and jerked her head in the direction. "I would be best ye'd say no word to your father," she added. "He'd only be after trouble."

And you wouldn't like that to happen, that anything should prevent our going, Finola thought, bitterly, but she said only, "I can't go without saying something to Hugh."

"He's down the field with your father."

"I'll call him."

She turned to the little boys who stood clanking their bundles, their faces washed, their hair flannelled with a brush dipped in water, in readiness for the great adventure. They were both well dressed and were bright-eyed from their weeping, and Finola had still the occasional hiccup. Anna regarded them sadly. She felt that she really hated the sight of them. Only Finola, pale and tight-lipped, moved her in some curious unacknowledged way. Despite her red hair, in this moment indeed she had a look of Hugh about her. They were, after all, twins. . . .

Finola ordered the two children to wait for her out in the lane. They went out without a word to Anna, and she had no word for them. Finola went out at the back of the house, and across the grassy stretch where the ducks and chickens wandered, and over the wall on to the pasture land which flowed down to the estuary. This was flanked by a haven, a long narrow lane between roughly-built stone walls; at the other side of the haven the land was cultivated with potatoes and a little corn. Finola went a

She yanked down the pasture land to the point where she could see across the horizon to the potato patch. She could see her father and Hugh heading over the farmstead.

She cupped her hands around her mouth and called her brother's name, and after a second call both men looked up. "Hugh-o!" she called again, and beckoned. She saw her brother turn to her father and then try to hide his face and eyes to the horizon. She went down the slope to meet him and waited for him by the wall.

He came at last to the wall and demanded, a little impatiently, "What is it, at all?"

She was aware of the warm smell of his tall thin young body and the childish way his damp hair formed itself into ringlets against his skull, and her heart seemed to melt in her breast with love and nerves.

"I'm going away, Hugh," she said, sadly. "I can't stand it any longer. This evening she was having Eamon for something not his kind, and poor little Pádraig breaking his heart over it, and it was not to be borne. She has a black soul, That One."

He looked at her, troubled.

"She has the bad black temper on her, all right, but how can you go down here? Where will you go?"

"I'll go to Aunt Míre, Mí'll go to Mí's in our barrow."

"You're taking the children?"

"She hates them as much as she hates me! How could I leave them? I'm all the mother they've known."

"But what will you do, at all?"

"I'll work! There are houses at Moniport that would want a strong girl that can cook and clean, and I'll find a corner for the three of us. Ah, but if you would be coming too, again?"

"You will enough here. Why would I be going from here?"

"She's evil, That One!"

He shrugged.

"She has the rough tongue and the quick temper, but now I get along well enough with her mouth, and why wouldn't you be forgetting her black moods and not minding her at all?"

"She doesn't want me here. She's always after telling me that no good can come of two women in one house, and 'tis not the best time she's hate the children."

"Sure they're none the worse for it!"

"She said why didn't we clear out, the lot of us. I've no often wanted to run away, Hugh. There's no one here for me but you—and you're in love with *Faith*."

He frowned.

"Maybe I am!"

"Maybe you are! Maybe a heart is more to you than your sister and brothers. Maybe you're making no complaint of."

Her voice was bitter.

"Sure I've nothing to complain of!"

"Then it's good-bye, Hugh—*aye*!"

She smiled, but her eyes were wet.

"Ah no! You'll be back. Sure 'twill all blow over and you'll be back."

"Maybe. But it's good-bye now."

"Good-bye then—and good luck!"

He moved, unconsciously. They could not kiss, because they never did kiss, and yet to shake hands, both reciprocal, was too formal.

"Good-bye," she said again. "Tell father only that I'm gone on a visit to Anna Melina."

She turned away and went back up the slope. At the top she looked back and saw him going down over the land back to the potato patch.

Hugh, his heart cried, Hugh, my dad leg, my brother! Free the me! God love you, my darling! God love you!

When she got back to the house Anna had disappeared. She picked up her sieve basket from the middle of the floor and took the bread and the milk and went out through the front door and across the small garden with its hedges of hawthorn and rosehedge, and its struggle of cream and pink rose-over a rough purple, and joined the little boys waiting patiently in the lane.

The sky was full of golden light and the mountains were a purple-blue. There was a plaintive cry of curlews and a trilling of oyster-catchers along the estuary, and like miniature white-cuffed yachts four swans sailed on the glassy surface of the lake. There was no sound but that of the curlews and the oyster-catchers, and in those bird-cries there was all the silent-creeders beauty and sadness of the West.

Finola looked at the four wild white swans and her heart wept.

II. Horse

WHAT FISCHER had said of Hugh was true: he was in love with a horse called *Patience*. Twelve pounds he had paid for her—was given a foot. He had won the money riding in the local races. At Ballymore he had won only two pounds, having come in third in a race; but in the next race he had come in first—ran away with it by several lengths—and collected ten pounds out of a fifteen pound plate. It had been said of him since he was fourteen that he was a 'grand little jockey'. He was father-light, with good hands, and in the town races he had ridden the best horse entered, a high-spirited little black mare that ran like the wind. For a while he had been neck-and-neck with a lady owner-rider on a grey gelding; it was a fine round race and he had the feeling that the lady rewarded him at the wall which striped the course into two fields; but after the first round he got clear of her and after that led all the way, standing in the wire rope, less low over the mare's neck, willing her on—because the stakes were a little red and grey riding-dinghy waiting on a mare down at the town quay. It was his last chance of making any money that year. Even if he were asked to ride in the next season's races the lady would have found an owner by then. And it had to

be that particular boat. It had been there at first sight when he had first seen her doing poetry as a bird on the water.

The little black mare was beautiful, but he did not love her; he had no part in her; she was merely a means to an end. Kathleen he loved because she was his. He had won her, ridden like she wild for her, his blood pounding, his lungs heaving as though they would burst, everything in him insisting that he must win—must, must, must. Because the prize was Kathleen.

He had wanted a boat as far back as he could remember. He would go to the point on Sunday afternoons and watch the sailing-boats emerging from the town quay. Two or three of them were 'class' boats, but not all. He had never wanted a class boat; just a little boat that was narrow and light, and which, rowing or sailing, he could handle with ease. As time went on he came to know some of the boat owners and would go out with them for the Sunday afternoon race. With them he learned how to handle a sailing-boat, and because he had no boat of his own he was always available when anyone wanted 'crew'. It was nothing all right, being crew in a trim little packet, but one day he would have a boat of his own; she wouldn't be a class boat but she would be his.

He went sailing in Kathleen before she became his. She was a grand little boat, he had thought immediately, the sort of little boat he would like for himself, though he did not dream then that he would own her. Then her owner bought a bigger boat, and Kathleen was for sale, and the races imminent, and Hugh's services requested. All things worked together for good.

The day after the race he called Kathleen down the

town quay and round the point and brought her up into the bay, his heart swelling with love and pride as she glided along with her patched weather-stained sails. One day, if he had the luck as he desired to ride a good horse again, and to win—and given a good horse he was confident he would win—she should have new sails, red ones.

He inspired her in the manner in which Finola left home, and in that first look of love it would have taken much more than his step-mother's ill-temper to have sent him away from those waters in which Kaidan was all his joy.

She filled his life like a love-suffrage. He lived only for those moments in which he could go to her. When he went down over the rough land to the rocky, windswept strand like some in which she was moored he was like a lover going to the beloved. The very sight of her quickened his blood; he would have a feeling of his heart swelling with love for her. He would murmur her name, as a lover murmurs the name of his love. He was fond of Finola, and felt a vague diffused affection for his young brothers and his father; but Kaidan he loved. All day he could see her as he worked on the slopes above the bay; sowing grass, laying potato furrows, sowing rye-bird's nests, spreading seaweed, mowing the corn in the open, he could look up from what he was doing and catch the red and grey gleam of her, watch the movement of her mast like a young striped tree.

There were calm still evenings, windless, when he would take down her mast and run her to the lake end of the quay, moving with slow light strokes over water smooth as glass. They had a peculiar quality for him, at

THE WILD SWANS

these evenings, in their peace and stillness. He would row his boat to the little islands that were submerged at high tide and rest on his oars and listen to the calling of curlews and oystercatchers, and and lo! in the stillness. Sometimes a seal would come to the surface and gaze at him with its large soft eyes. He would watch the herons on their long slender legs, or the terns letting themselves fall out of the sky like stones, or the white gulls drifting with gale long-ghost shadows in the whiteness under their wings. He would feel then that he loved this wild beautiful land in which he had been born and bred, and that he could never go from it. He loved it for its wild strangeness and deep peace. He loved it because Kathleen belonged there. She belonged so much to the curlews, was so much a part of it all. And he belonged because she did.

He did not greatly miss Paula and the little boys. He had never felt close to her. Or to any human being. The little more he had ridden in the rain had meant more to him for fifteen minutes of thundering hooves and flying mud, and there and was flashing past, than Paula or anyone else had meant in sixteen years. He was completely unaware of the bright, halloey, half-held gleams she gave him on Sundays at Mass, and on the rare occasions when he was in the town. Kathleen gliding smoothly among the steep islands of Lough Erne, stripped of her sails, or leaning over on her side, fully rigged, bounding out to the open sea and feeling already the impact of the Atlantic breakers—that was his life. The deep peace, or the wild exhilaration; emotionally it was all he knew, and for a long time all he needed to live.

Paula wrote occasionally from Westport. She had got work almost at once as chambermaid in a hotel and

was supporting the heap at their Aunt Melina's. She herself lived in the heap. She wrote that she missed the familiar scenes and asked were there still four rooms on the lake? But no one answered her letters, and in time she gave up writing. Hugh was glad to know all was well with her, but he had never written a letter in his life, and in any case dividing the hours between work and Father he had no time.

By the time he was eighteen he was too heavy to ride in the cars, but he had won Father's love out of all odds the year before and covered her for the annual regatta; but the weather was too heavy for her on the day and she was pelted with the other small boats entered, and he was injured as now in a stream-lined jacket that scooped away with the rap. But he had no desire to even reach a boat himself; still Father was all his joy, all his love.

"All you can think of is that little sailing-ship," his step-mother told him impatiently, one day, adding, "Any other lad of your age would be taking an interest in girls by now!"

For some time now Anna had been intensely aware of her husband's own as an extremely attractive young man—who was hardly aware that she existed—except, she would think himself, as part of the general framework of the place. She wanted at least that he should be aware of her as a woman, and a good-looking one at that—give her some small compliment that she looked ten years younger than she was—which was almost true—that she was more attractive than many a young girl; which again was true. She did not ask that he should be in love with her, but only that he should notice her—appreciatively. That would be something. Indeed it would be very much.

Yet to Edla compared with all that mattered—loveship, animal passion for him, and to which she gave no name, because she dared not.

But in reply to her taunt about the girl he replied, laughingly, yet seriously, that Edla was worth all the treasures in the world. Anna knew that it was true for him, but until then he had never put it into words, so that the knowledge had had no living reality for her. Now it had, and all the jealousy she had felt for Frede was directed against it. She had a savage desire to smash through the endless dream in which the boy lived and caress him with the realities of flesh and blood, pain and desire, so that however he saw her, young or middle-aged or old, at least he saw her as a woman. Let him come alive into the real world in which men and women were aware of each other, the good or ill, loved and suffered, hated and struggled, but were somehow alive to each other. Let him even hate and despise her; at least then he would be conscious of her.

In the long light summer evenings she would stand at the back door of the house and look out over the water, and as late as eleven o'clock, when it was still light, there in the far West, she would catch the red gleam of the little boat moving among the lake islands, or the dip of her sails as she tumbled seawards. When the light began to fall he would come up over the bouldery head, along the stone-walled haven, and into the dim lamplight of the house, and upon his face there would be a lost dreaming look as though only his body had come into the house; as though all that was essential of himself was still out there on the glittering water that still held the ripples shivering with sunset. When she spoke to him he would answer

already; he would cut himself a place off bread, butter it, and as likely as not go and stand by the door to eat it, his eyes still upon the shadowy water. As though, she would think herself, only that had really for him.

These things would turn in her like a physical pain. Michael would sit staring by a low fire, dreary from the long day he waded and rowed and ran. In his fortune he seemed to her already an old man, with his decreased face, his slow heavy movements, his rheumatisms, his evening drowsiness, his inexpressiveness to her moods. For years now she had only two moods where he was concerned—irritation or indifference. But neither her boredom nor her nagging touched him; only if she had suddenly not baked the bread or made the bed would he have been aware of any change in her. Only for a very little while had she replaced Eva for him; when she had ceased to be Eva, he had reverted to loneliness and came to terms with it. Anna became merely part of the house, as the cattle were part of the land, and as such she was involved in the patterns of his life—as Hugh was. Only Hugh was closer to him, because he was part of Eva, and there was a kind of understanding between them, and a tacit, unacknowledged alliance against Anna. Hugh was something left over from the days when there had been love and joy in life, as well as work and struggle and dreariness.

But for Anna there was nothing left over from the days of joy. She had no children of her own, and she had driven her stepchildren from the house like any wicked step-mother of fairy-tale or legend. There were two men in the house, but neither noticed what she went or how she looked; for them both she was merely there to bake bread, make beds, sweep the house, and, when required,



"Shall I hang round here up just alone?"

land a hand on the land. And she was not old, still in her thirties, scarcely a line in her face, and her blood strong and warm in her woman's body. If only once Hugh should remark upon her dress, or that she had done her hair another way, say that she looked well, or that she did not look well, if only once she could catch in his eyes the flash of recognition of her as a woman still alive in her body—but Hugh had no eyes for anything but a boat called *Kathleen*, and that for him was something far more really alive than any background-people of the women-of-the-house.

Just after Hugh's sixteenth birthday in September great gales sprang up with the equinoctial tide, and Anna had a sense of the tide of her blood flowing full and strong as the waters of the estuary, and of great gales blowing in her soul. She would stand at the back door of the house and look out at the grey, moon-drawn water and feel herself as irresistibly in the grip of this elemental force. There was the spring tide which belonged to youth, and there was the autumn tide which flowed as strong and deep, and as irresistibly, when youth was gone, and that tide had risen in her, as it had risen in the sea itself.

On the second day of the equinox, when Hugh was away at the bog with his father, she ascended to the tide in her blood and went down over the boundary land to the little cove where *Kathleen* rocked like a red and grey bird on the mist-coloured water. Hugh had moored her with one little slack on the anchor rope for Anna to be able to pull her in to the shore. She took off her dress, tucked her skirt up almost to her hips, and waded out and struggled up on to the red-painted decking in the bow. The gale was at her skirts and hair, and the little boat

rolled and plunged as Anna stumbled along to the stern and tugged at the anchor rope. When she finally got the anchor up it was covered with seaweed. She let it down again gently over the side of the boat, careful that it should not grip. When Hugh came down to the stern again he would find that his precious boat had dragged its anchor—presumably in the gales. The rocks between which she was moored would deal with the boat itself.

Hugh went down to the stern that evening after supper. The weather was too wild for either sailing or rowing, but he never let a day pass without visiting Fathos, and with the tide running high and strong in the grip of the moon and the gales he was a little anxious, always fearful that he had given her too much or too little slack to meet her needs.

That evening when he came down over the slope he saw even before he reached the cave that the anchor had not, as he thought, held, and the little boat had been wrung on to the rocks, smashing her ribs in like a trampled egg-shell. She was half-submerged. Knowing it to be pointless he nevertheless picked up the pulser to pull in the wreck of her. It was then that beside the boulder to which he had tied the boat he found one of Anna's hair combs.

Anna watched him coming up over the land and was afraid, there was such a darkness in his face. It was as though his face had become suffused with a darker kind of blood; or as though a shadow had become indelibly fixed there. He strode across the fields, and the marshy stretch where the chickens scratched, and into the kitchen. Anna stood washing dishes in an enamel bowl on the table. He flung the comb down beside the fire, then

turned and stole into his bedroom. A few minutes later he came out with a bundle under his arm—his clothes rolled into a blanket.

She asked, dazedly, "Where are you going?"

"Anywhere out of here!"

His voice was strange.

He was pale now, under his tan, and his lips were pressed together in a thin pale line. His tall thin body was tense—as it seemed to her with hate.

"Your father——"

"Tell him what you did! Perhaps he'll hate you as you hate little Fildrig the evening you drove Filda out. I hope so! With all my heart, I hope so!"

She paled under the violence of his words. It was as though he had struck her himself. She felt sick from the impact.

"Hugh!" she called after him as he strode out at the front door, but he did not look back. She wanted to run after him and drag him back with her own hands, but at the back of her mind she knew that he would only throw her to the ground. She could scream herself hoarse and he would not so much as look over his shoulder. He had gone—finally and forever.

"Hugh!" she cried again, and it seemed to her that she screamed it, but in fact her lips merely shaped the word in a whisper.

III. FLORENCE AND HUGH

WHEN HUGH arrived in Liverpool, Miss Florence was at her place as usual, and told her she had left home for good, she was at first wild with joy, believing that now they would all be together again.

"You will surely find work here," she assured him, "and perhaps we can find a cottage and I can keep house again for all of us—we will have a home again!"

He looked away from her, unable to witness the rejoicing of the light in her.

"I can't stay here in the West, any more," he said in a low voice. "I have enough to get me to Dublin, and then I shall apply for a sugar-boon factory job in England and go over with one of the fleets of Latham parties."

She gazed at him, motionless. Without looking at her he was aware of the wild grief and disappointment in her.

"Stay here with us, Hugh," she pleaded.

He made a restless movement that was both desperate and impatient.

"I can't," he repeated. "I belong here in the West, but in the place where I was born and bred, and to say there any longer is impossible. You were right about That One, Florence—she's evil all right."

He told her, then, about the boat.

"I loved that little boat," he concluded.

"More than your sister and your brothers; more than your father?" There was no bitterness in her voice, only a deep pain. She raised her hands to her face and pressed the tips of her fingers into her eyes to press back the tears.

"Couldn't you try loving your own flesh and blood, Hugh? Are you really so inhuman you can only love a boat? Couldn't you," she asked, painfully, "grow up, Hugh?"

Anger spurred in him then and he turned away from her.

"A boat can't wrap me up or hug me or repent for me. The more I see of human beings the more I say—give me a boat!"

"You could stay here and in time get another—I don't mean in Whitport, but at least you needn't leave the country. Then at least we could meet sometimes."

His face assumed a childish expression.

"It's tough then or nothing for me, I'm afraid. I guess it's in my blood. I loved every rock and bird and island in those waters—almost every cloud and shadow that passed over them. If I can't have all that—and I can't!—then I'll have another land, another life, entirely. It's the way I am, or there's no more to say except Good-bye and God Bless."

He smiled resolutely.

"Maybe you and the boys will come to England one day yourselves?"

She shook her head.

"I'm belong here."

He shrugged.

THE WILD FRANK

"OK. You may change your mind—as the boys may when they're older. I'll keep in touch. Good-bye now."

"You won't stay over a night just to see your brothers? They're away on the bog till the evening."

"Ah, no! Their big brother is nothing to them—none, truth to tell, are they much to him. We hardly know each other."

He was kind, she thought; his heart had never been opened to any human love. Perhaps if their mother had lived a few more years. . . . She shut the thought away.

"God go with you," she said. "I shall grasp for you, again."

"Go then," he said, smiled, and was gone.

In the evening she had a little time off and went over to their aunt's house. Kieran and Pádraig had returned from the bog and were sitting down to their tea. She told them, "Our brother called in to see me this morning. He has left home and is going to England to make some money so that one day soon we can all be together again in a little house of our own. He was asking for you both and was sorry he couldn't wait over to see you. He sent you his love."

God forgive the lie, she thought. It was a harmless fairy-tale, and the truth was too bitter.

The week was broken now and filled with school. They got work where they could, doing odd jobs for the various small farmers outside the town, or helping on the bogs. Kieran was gentle and serious, like Fionn; Pádraig had more surface charms, like Hugh, and was considered the more attractive of the two both in appearance and manner, but there was growth warmth and affection

needed play his volatile manner, and he was devoted to his wife, and to the three who had sustained them both for as long as they could remember. Hugh they regarded as the adult brother, and Finola loyally built him up in their hearts and minds as firm and good, but he remained, necessarily, remote and impersonal for them.

Finola was as proud of the twins as though she were their mother; she was proud of their intelligence and their gentle manners, and the fact that everyone said what good boys they were, hard-working and serious, not smoking cigarettes and running after girls the moment they left school. It was a pity they wouldn't have had a better education and be doing something better than odd-jobbing and bar-tendering. They were the sort of lads, people said, who might be expected to train for the priesthood. Afterwards Finola remembered that people said this.

Their thirteenth birthday fell on a Sunday, and they celebrated it by climbing the holy mountain, Croagh Patrick, a few miles outside the town. They could not begin the climb till mid-afternoon, as Finola was not free until mid-day, and they were some time on the road out of Wexford before they got a lift in a car. The devout climb Croagh Patrick in the early morning, fasting and barefoot, on Garland Sunday, the last Sunday in July, and Mass is celebrated in the little chapel at the top. Those who are very devout indeed do the Stations of the Cross at the top of the mountain, on their knees, though each station is some distance from the other, and the stones are about five.

All this Finola told her brothers as they toiled up the steep steep slopes. Next year she planned that they

should join the summer pilgrimage and do the climb barefoot and fasting even if they were not 'able for' the fastness on their knees—though the boys declared that even they would be able for that too; they would climb the mountain several times before then, barefoot, to get themselves into training.

Though Patrick is strong all the way, but the mountain is nothing but a mass of loose flints which slip and slide under the feet, and all about is a desolation of stones and great grey boulders. It is a mountain to climb the more rather than glazy, for it demands no mountaineering skill, but merely a dogged patience and perseverance and endurance; nor is it a rewarding mountain, for as often as not the summit is shrouded in a weeping mist and there is no view to be had.

But on the day that Finola and her brothers climbed it, there was no threatening mist, but on the contrary a soft sunset glow over everything, and, it seemed to the boys, a whole world of boys and boys and islands spread out below them, all held in a soft golden light.

The chapel was closed, but they knelt down in the porch and said the Rosary together, which they had said every evening by the fire-side in their father's house in the old days; after which they walked round the chapel, taking in the splendour of the pavement on all sides.

Then it was they saw the priest. He was sitting on a boulder, looking out across the sea glimmering in the distance; his face was touched by the glow of the sunset, so that there seemed a kind of radiance about him. He was young, and there was great sweetness in his face, and in the smile he turned on the girl and the two young lads.

"It's a beautiful evening," he observed.

"It is, Father," Finola answered him.

"Is it your first time on Lough Patrick?"

"It is, Father," she said again, and added, "But we are hoping to come with the pilgrims next year and do it properly—barefoot and fasting. My brothers even say they will do the Stations of the Cross on their knees!"

He smiled at the two boys, on either side the tall red-haired girl, the one all surface-charm, smiling and open, and the other who smiled only nervously, and whose manner was a little withdrawn.

The priest asked them where they came from and they told him that they were all three living and working in Wexford, but that their home was on the peninsula above Lough More, and they had a brother gone to England; and Finola, who was spokesman for the three of them, added that this brother was her twin.

"We are two pairs of twins in our family," she explained.

The young priest regarded them with interest.

"That is unusual. It is like the children of Lila. You remember the legend?"

"Our father told it to us when we were children. He called my brother and me after the two eldest children of Lila."

"Finola and Hugh?"

"Yes. But my younger brothers are not Finola and Hugh, but Pickering and Ramon, because my mother died when they were born, and my father had no heart any more for fairy-tales."

"But this is very strange," the priest said, "because in

the story the mother died when the second twins were born—and Lir married again——”

“And the step-mother drove the children from home and turned them into swans,” Fionla finished for him, and her smile was sad. “Except that we were not turned into swans it is our story too.”

“In the story Fionla spread her wings over her brothers and protected them in all their wanderings. I think the story is true in all respects.”

“Fionla died it will not be true in all respects, Father, for in the tale there is a time when Fionla is separated from all her brothers, and with Hugh already gone, that I could not bear.”

She looked with a sudden wildness at them both, and Eamon touched her hand and said, smiling, out of his withdrawal, “We shall never leave our sister.” He looked at the priest as he said it, and there was something a very little defiant in his tone.

Malruig smiled his charming smile.

“We should be lost without our sister,” he said simply.

The priest returned his smile, but he said, “What can mortal God’s will?”

Then he got up. “Shall we go down together?” he suggested, pleasantly.

He told them on the way down that his name was Michael Mahony, that he belonged to the Redemptorist order, and was on holiday with a party of student-priests from very far, but had taken the afternoon off whilst they were relaxing and hoping to enjoy a little solitary meditation on Cragh Patrick—when one lived always in a community, he added, it was sometimes good for the

used to know a little solitude, and in the monastic life it was a blessing not often remembered.

He knew all the country round Lough Shee, and had many times watched the swans on the lake lake, and the herons wading in their long legs among the little islands. When he spoke of these things tears came into Finola's eyes, and she murmured, "Praise God, our day we shall see all such again, ourselves, for we were born and bred among the swans-shore Lough Shee, and we are strangers among the streets and houses here."

Father Mahony said again, with his ready smile, "What can I say? the will of God? But," he added, his eyes soft upon her troubled face, "You could have a word with God about it. Or ask Our Lady to put in a word for you. God is very reasonable—much more reasonable than He is commonly given credit for."

"I do pray for it," Finola assured him. "I pray for it night and day—and for Hugh to come back to me."

By the time they got back to Westport Finola and her brothers felt that Father Mahony was an old friend; he told them that next summer it was likely that the students' pilgrims would again spend their holidays in this district, and if he should be accompanying them he would come and see them. In the meantime perhaps they would write to him occasionally at their headquarters, the great monastery, Clavin Abbey, at Clavin. At this Finola and Patrick laughed, and Finola explained that in their family they were not given to writing letters, but Eamon, the serious one, said that perhaps he would write sometimes.

"Ah, ah," said Father Mahony, and it was as though a bond had been created between them.

"He's alive," Patrick said, in his simple way, when the priest had left them.

"Yes, he's alive," Flinch agreed, but somewhere deep within herself she was troubled. She looked at the withdrawn face of Eamon.

"You liked him too, Eamon?"

He looked at her and it was as though he came out of a dream to answer her.

"It seems so strange that he should be there like that—as though he were waiting for us. I keep thinking there was some purpose in it."

"What sort of purpose, Eamon?" Her voice was fearful.

"I don't know. The will of God isn't always revealed immediately, is it? Only that we should think enough Patrick today, and find Father Mahony there as though waiting—that wasn't just chance. I am sure of it!"

There had been something flicked in his face as he said this, but when he had finished speaking that curious look of light and eagerness was withdrawn, and he became remote again, lost in some private reverie, and he did not speak again.

Oh God, her heart prayed, the story has been so like the story of the children of Eir in all things yet, but let it not be like it to the end. Let them stay under my wings, these two little ones. Don't take them from me. And send Hugh back to me. Holy Mary, sweet Mother of God, hear me, help me. . . . Only if what I ask is impossible, help me to say—They will be done. . . .

As time went on Flinch knew that Eamon wrote to Father Mahony and received letters from him. It was

evident that the correspondence made him very happy. Sometimes Finck thought that the pen was a substitute for the idealized big brother he had never really known.

Karson shared the letters with Pilsbry, who enjoyed the friendship, as it were, at second-hand. Pilsbry did not himself feel any need for this friendship outside of their family circle, but he was glad that his twin was happy. Karson told Finck about the letters, but he did not show them. He could hardly have said why. Somewhere within himself he felt that his sister was—not hostile to Father Mahony, but afraid, without knowing exactly what she was afraid of. He too was a little afraid, but he had a sense of being drawn in a certain direction, and he was content to be drawn, without asking where it would lead. Only one thing he knew, clearly, that whenever it drew him his brother would join him, because they were the split halves of one body and soul. As Finck and Hugh were. Which meant—that, too, he was certain—that one day Hugh would come back.

Finck kept her unformed fears folded within her heart. Since God's will would in any case be done it were better to be sublimated in a belief than, asking only the grace to accept and to endure.

The following summer the Redemptoris students picnic came in Westport for their holiday, and Father Mahony accompanied them. On Garland Sunday they made the ascent of Gough Patrick, and Karson and Pilsbry went with them. There were hundreds of pilgrims on the mountain that day, as every year, but Finck was not among them. She had the feeling that her brothers wanted to do something with their beloved Father Mahony, and that she was somehow outside of it. It was true that

all three had urged her that she come with them, but she had pleaded that she was 'not able for it'. She did not, in fact, feel that she had either the physical or the moral strength. There was a curious heaviness in her, body and spirit—the sense that the sacrifice she offered must be of another kind and in another place. God did not ask of His children more than they had strength to bear, and what He asked of her had yet to be revealed, though in her heart she knew the nature of it, and had the sense of waiting, and of preparation.

So that when Eamon came to her, after Garland Sunday, and told her that Father Mahony wanted that he and Pádraig should complete their education with the Christian Brothers for two years, and then consider becoming novices in the Redemptorist order, and that he and Pádraig had discussed this matter earnestly together, and decided that this was what they wanted to do—it came neither as a surprise nor a shock to her. It was as though she had known all along, despite Eamon's vow never to leave her, and only waited for it to be put into words.

"But Pádraig," she said. "Is it what Pádraig really wants? You are not alike, you and Pádraig—you are less alike than Hugh and I am."

"We are of one heart and mind in this matter," Eamon told her, and added, "But you should speak to Pádraig yourself."

This she did. Pádraig turned his eager smile on her and told her, simply, "What is happiness for Eamon is happiness for me also."

There was nothing more to be said. Eamon had been right, then, they had not climbed the holy mountains that Sunday a year ago and found Father Mahony, as it were

waiting for them at the top, merely by chance; it had been part of a Divine plan, and the will of God there was no guessing.

Father Mahony came to see her.

"You will think that I influenced your brothers," he said, gently, "and it is true. But only because there was material there waiting to be shaped. Had they been other than they are I should have left them to work on the bugs and ferns. Had Karen not written to me as he did, opening his heart to me, then I could not have replied as I did. Had they been other than they are they would not have responded to my words."

"People always said they should have been priests," she said, heavily.

"With God's help they will be."

She bowed her head.

"Amen to that, Father."

"Shall we pray together that their sacrifice and pain may be acceptable to God?"

Her eyes filled with tears.

"Say the prayer for me, Father; my heart is too full."

She dropped on her knees beside her bed, facing the crucifix above it. She heard the priest's voice:

"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. . . ."

She crossed herself and the quiet voice continued:

"Behold me at thy feet, O Virgin most kind, seeking to obtain through thee the most important grace of knowing what I ought to do. I desire nothing but to comply perfectly with the Will of thy Divine Son at every moment of my life. Mother of Good Counsel, let me hear
 A

dry sails. It will dispel every doubt that troubles my mind. . . ."

When she was alone she sat a long time with her head in her hands. One after another they went from her, like fledglings that in due time leave the nest, creeping out from under the warm protective wings of the mother, never to return. It was not easy to offer to God 'the acceptable sacrifice'. We are the Children of Lir born again, she thought, despairingly; it had all to be lived over again, all the pain and sorrow and loneliness; it had all to come true, all over again, and it was more than the heart could bear. The legends of Fionnuala of the legend, alone upon the Sea-Stack, her brothers flown from her, came into her mind:

"There is not to be yet sleep . . .
 "Although the tempest shattered my heart.

O my beloved ones, my Three,
 When sleep under the shelter of my brothers,
 Shall you and I ever meet again
 "Till the dead rise to life? . . .

Shall I hereforth bear my pain alone?"

She saw the sister even left clinging upon the rock, the brother even all gone from her, and her wings were frozen to her sides, wild waters lashing all about her, and all human lamentation crying in the howling of the wind.

But as she sat there the storm passed over her, and it came to her that this was not the salvation for which

¹ Translated from the Irish by T. W. Ballman in his book *The High Seat of Fionn*, published by George Harrap & Co., 1920.

she had prayed, and which Father Mabeap had asked for her, and she pressed her fingers into her eyes to blacken-out the images of the wild swans into which the children of Lir had been turned, and in a darkness that with deep crosses repeated, with resolute concentration, the Hail Holy Queen:

'Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! hail our life, our redemption, and our hope. . . .'

With the last words, 'O clearest, O purest, O sweet Virgin Mary', peace returned to her; the peace of resignation.

IV. MICHAEL AND ANNA

IT IS DUE to our Pichsny and Karon became novices in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and Anna was there only when they came with the other student-priests from Clavin Abbey for their holidays. They had grown into tall handsome young men. Pichsny still ended his charming smile, and Karon was still the serious man, always a little withdrawn. Pichsny was more popular with his fellow-students; Karon with the fathers. Yet, for all that, Pichsny was not less devoted than his brother. In the end, Father Maloney sometimes thought, it might even be that Pichsny, by his very warmth and humanity, would prove the better priest, just because he was less saintly, less idealistic, and therefore nearer to the common people, the poor and humble to whose spiritual service the order was especially dedicated.

Hugh wrote sometimes from England. He was heart-sick and homesick for Ireland, yet he never spoke of returning. He moved about the country and had all manner of jobs—on the roads, in factories, sometimes in farms. He talked of joining a ship and working his passage to America. He sent cards at Christmas and Easter and remembered birthdays. He had money saved in the post-office savings bank; he spoke of pubs and cinema, and

THE WILD SWAN

strange names came into his letters, and Fieda did not know they were the names of places or of streets—Stephens's Bush, Hammermith Broadway, Finsbury, the West End, the Strand, Wapping, Charing Cross. It was all unimaginable. Hugh was rarely the great traveller, now! And when she read his letters' denudation closed round her heart and she felt like the statue woman of the legend with her wings frozen to her sides, alone on the Red Bank in the gale-swept stream.

Michael Selous received news of what his children were doing in the periodic exchange of letters between Anna and Myles. Myles reported when Hugh went to England, and when Fieda and Emerson joined the Redemptarians, she reported that Fieda was still working at the same hotel and was "a fine girl now that should be looking for a husband but is wrapped up in her brother and in my baby".

When Anna informed her husband of his children's doings he merely granted:

"What is that to me?" he would demand. "Weren't they one and all after walking out on me?"

He did not hold it against her that his children had left home. Fieda going with the young boys had never much concerned him; Hugh's going he had deplored. If Hugh couldn't stand up to a woman's tantrums and the loss of a home, so much the worse for him, and he was no more worthy to be called his son.

Anna was always at him to tell up the place and go to England or America.

"There's no life here," she insisted. "We tell them the story up of the run to its going down, and at the end what have we? Barely enough to clothe and feed us and

pay the rates! In England you would be making as much in a single week as we make in a whole month here! Ah, but wouldn't it be a fine thing to have a regular sum coming in every week, and not be depending on selling a cow or a calf or a bullock on side-days; buying a horse before Christmas for twelve pounds in the hope of selling it in the spring for a miserable few pounds more, and no certainty to it? Wouldn't it be a fine thing to know for certain when the next pound was coming from, and not to be scraping and saving for a new pair of boots and begrudging the price of a sack of flour? God between me and all harm, but haven't the two of us more right to it than many more there that are making good money in the devil's own employment?"

Michael never hesitated her when she talked in this strain. Let her get up and leave him, let her go to pagan England itself if she wasn't satisfied, but he would stay where he was born and bred, and where, by the grace of God, he hoped to die. Not much of the ancient Canslerman's coat looked like being walked for him—

*"Health and long life to you,
The woman of your choice to you,
Land without rent to you,
And death in Eira."*

The woman of his choice had died on him, and though he had land without rent he had to pay taxes on it; but at least he could hope for death in Eira and to be buried in the little graveyard above the lake, under the same Celtic cross as stood unaltered over his parents . . . and Eira. If only because it was their last resting-place he could never go from here.

But it was more than that; he felt he knew what the Valera had meant when he had declared that he loved every blade of grass that was Ireland. He did himself; he did, so. Every morning of his life, wet or dry, when he walked down the haven to the quay, with the salt smell of the sea, and the sweet smell of the burning turf in the houses behind him, heard the crows calling their wild and cry along the lake, something in him gave thanks, and, in the struggle with the sleep and what it was, he had no wish to be in any other place, or live any other kind of life. Deep within him he felt that this was what God intended for him; that it was for this he had been made, and nothing else. In this alone was fulfillment. His first wife had died, his second had failed him, his children had left home, even his beloved eldest son, upon whom he had counted, in whom he had trusted, but the land had not failed him. It gave, sparingly, but all it had; it demanded patience and faith and unceasing toil, but it gave in return—it gave a living for the body, and a food of peace to the soul.

But all this was inarticulate in him, only dimly apprehended, like the holy mysteries of the Mass; there were no words for it; thought had shape, like a cloud or a stone; feeling was disposition as light or darkness, but none the less a reality. He did not think about the land and his relation to it; he felt it. And he knew that it was something Anna did not feel, so that when the spoke of sailing up and going to England or America it was painless to attempt to answer her. Let her go, let them all go; he would stay where he belonged. If she belonged with the life of cities, of crowds and streets and factories, then let her go to it. She was little use, anyhow, with her

horris wood and her nagging tongue. Let her go, and be damned to her. She complained that life here was all work and no play; so much the worse for her. Other women had as little play and were content. But then they shared their husbands' beds and bore children, and counted themselves lucky if they got a bottle of rum for their supper on five-days, and a new head-scarf to wear at Easter.

For himself he had diversion enough with getting drunk on parties on these five-days when he had the good fortune to sell a horse for a good price; and there was the odd flutter of a few bob on a horse at the local races, and the Galley races—not that he ever got as far as the latter, fifty long miles away—and those big affairs overseas, the Derby and the Grand National. God might not approve of dipping and betting—the priests certainly didn't—but he had the feeling that in the final reckoning those periodic lapses would not be held against him, for God would understand that in his kind of life there was nothing else due. . . .

When he had 'the drink taken' he would brood upon Hugh, grievously, with a sense of betrayal. His eldest son had betrayed him, and his ancestors, and the land. Blaise's Hugh loved the land, as was natural to a Peirce, and hadn't he betrayed it with his going? What was he doing in England, at all, working for the enemies of Ireland? Then all the wrongs of the Treaty, 'the troubles' and 'the Tans', would come back to him, all somehow linked up with Hugh's betrayal, and from being morose drunk he would become roaring drunk, and occasionally, 'foolish', he would fall into the hands of the Garda, and wake next morning in a cell. He would pay his fine, his

blue eyes glazing. "Dread, was it?" The Guards would laugh. "You were," they would assure him, "madness!"

Then he would walk home, brooding still, because if he had been mad and foolish as they said, the night before, whose fault was it but the betrayed Hugh's? Who else had set the seal upon his loneliness? But back on the land again peace would come to him, a calm laid on movement and grief alike. Peace that was a kind of forgiveness; and a kind of love. But this, too, was something which did not assume the definite shape of thoughts, but lay indistinct, somewhere, deep down in the twilight of half-awareness, in the secret places of the heart.

"He's dark, That One," Anna would think bitterly, and she too brooded, because there was darkness in herself and she did not forgive life—or herself.

If Hugh were to come back, she would think, it would be like a light coming into the house. But she knew that Hugh would not come back. Not whilst she was there,

V. FIONA AND HUGH

WHEN PADRAG and Eamon had been with the Redemptionists two years, and Hugh had been in England five years, they received news from Fiona that their father had "dropped dead" in the town on a fair day. Fiona had the news from Maire, who had received a telegram from Anna.

At first it was thought that Michael Belone had collapsed with the burden of drink in him, for he'd a drop taken all right, and he was carried into the barracks of the Guard, but when they got him there they found he was dead. A doctor was sent for and diagnosed heart-failure; he had twice attended Michael Belone in the last twelve months for silver heart-attacks, and had warned him about the drink. But Michael Belone was not a man to heed a doctor's warning; he had had "a bad time" or two; all right; he wouldn't die of it. Only that is where he was wrong, he die of it he did. He had his wish and was buried in the little graveyard above the lake, under the Celtic stone, beside the gentle Eva, and his parents.

Padraig and Eamon and Fiona could not arrive in time for the Requiem Mass, but they were round the grave. Hugh did not come. They had no word from him. Padraig and Eamon went away after the burial, and

Floella and Mabel walked with Anna to the house, where a few neighbours would be coming in, in the customary fashion.

Anna looked old and worn, Floella thought, and she had only gentleness and compassion in her heart for her step-daughter. Anna's manner to the girl was non-committal, neither hostile nor friendly; it was as though it were a matter of complete indifference to her whether Floella was there or not. Actually it did matter very little to her, for her mind was weighed down with the shock of the discovery that Michael had made a will, of which she had known nothing, and deposited it with the town-solicitor who had drawn it up for him, in which he had left everything to Hugh—with the recommendation that he did not see his step-daughter want. That was the final insult, the kick, that she should be thrown upon Hugh's charity. She was resolved to spare herself that indignity at least.

"What will you do, now?" Mabel inquired quite pathetically. Then Anna told her about the will, and Floella exclaimed, "But Hugh will not have it that way—I am sure he will wish you to have everything!"

Anna said, harshly, "I don't want it! I've always wanted to get away from here, and now I'm free to go!" She looked fiercely from her sister to her step-daughter. "I can work, can't I? I don't need to be dependent on my step-son's charity, do I?"

"Hugh wouldn't see it like that," Floella told her, distressed. "There's no spite or meanness in Hugh."

Anna lifted her head, proudly.

"That's as may be. Michael hated me at the end and he wished to humiliate me. But he can't do it! I'm free of him at last—of the whole Belsomville!"

"Thank, Anna," Miska pleaded. "He's dead now, that rest him. He meant well, no doubt. Hugh is his heir, and didn't he say in his will he was to care for you? He did it for the best, not a doubt of it."

"He did it because he hated me, and because from first to last he was lonely after Hugh, and blamed me for his going."

It seemed both to Miska and to Paula neither to argue with her any further in her present state of mind, so they continued the rest of the way along the postulate road in silence.

There were neighbours gathered in the house, the older women wrapped in black shawls, the men in their Sunday suits and cloth caps. They murmured their sympathies to Anna in low voices as she came amongst them, but she gathered her shawl more tightly about her, and went to the kitchen table and stood there, one hand resting on it, half turning to face them all, when they stood, diffidently, a little awkwardly, by the door and windows. Her eyes were hard and dark as she faced them, and though she was pale with anger and hatred there was a kind of wild darkness in her face.

"I'm glad you're all gathered here," she said, "because in this way I can say goodbye to you one and all and be done with it. You'll not see me after this. I'm going back this day with my sister to Westport, on the evening bus, and then I'm going to England. For good! This place is Hugh's, and no doubt he'll come back now."

She turned to Miska.

"There's some business of mine, and some pay. Maybe you'd see everyone gets something. I'm going in the rain to park."

She turned and walked into her bedroom and the door closed on her.

"Ah, the creature," an old woman exclaimed, gazing after the closed door. "She's haunted with grief-evilbody!"

"She's nothing of the kind," Maria said, tartly. "Hush! be turned her very badly, leaving everything as Hugh like that!"

Frieda put in quickly, "My father said in his will that Hugh was to look after his step-mother. Take your duties, now, and not be speaking ill of the dead, and be not put an hour in his grave!"

Then she turned and walked out at the back door, and went over the backberry land to where it dipped down to the lagoon, and there she sat on a wall and looked out over the broad familiar scene. It was a warm afternoon in April, and daffodils bloomed where they had seeded themselves under walls and bridges, and the lake was still and gleaming. Gulls were called, and there was the falling of water-catchers, their anxiously repeated cries serving only to emphasize the deep stillness. At the lake end of the estuary, among the islands, two vessels glided like white-tailed yachts, and her heart contracted with the sight of them. She was again the sternward along upon the Seal Rock, and the lament of Hilda's mother echoed in her heart—"Shall I evermore hear my part done?" If only Hugh had come; if only they might all be united and happy again. Who should say in what loneliness of spirit her father had made that will, unknown to Anna, bequeathing everything to his eldest son? Hugh had always been his favourite, and his going must have been a deep grief to him. Now if Hugh should come back! And if Frieda and Emma should rescind the order and they

would all there be safe under her wings again! Dreams, dream! Hugh would not come, and it was unthinkable that the budding young pilots, having successfully gone through the hard years of their novitiate, should turn back now. It was no doubt that hands should even with them to.

On the journey back to Westport Anna scarcely spoke. Her old bosom friend, in the taxi, pale, slight-lipped, withdrawn, wrapped, is seated in Finska, in a grip full of cold garments.

Back at the hotel the friend Hugh waiting—a Hugh she had never seen, well-dressed, like the English people who came to the hotel, and something new in his face—but what that newness was it was hard to say, except that he had been a boy when he went away and now he was a man; the dreaming softness had gone from his face; what had replaced it was not hardness but awareness. The expression now was not lost and dreaming, but determined, with something a little disillusioned about the mouth and eyes. He was thinner, and looked tired.

Finska's first thought was how much older he looked—much older than five years could account for.

She cried his name, on a little intake of breath, and ran to him, blindly, and he took her hands—which was something he would not have done five years ago. He took both her hands and held them against his breast and smiled down at her, and now his eyes were no longer starred and watchful, but soft.

"It's good to see you again," he said.

"Couldn't you get here in time for the funeral?"

"I didn't try. I knew she would be there—That One—and I couldn't face it. I came because of a telegram from the children. I have to see them about the will. And I

wanted to see you. I've come home, Fieola—for good. We'll go back together....."

She could only cling to him, speechless with wonder and joy, laughing and crying together.

He brushed her hair back from her face and his own eyes were wet, though he smiled.

"She won't want to be with us, will she?" he asked, anxiously.

She shook her head.

"She packed and left today—we came back together, she and Aunt Maria and myself. She's going to England. She's glad to get away, but she's bitter."

His lips tightened, and the light went out of his face.

"She's no call to be."

"She won't take anything from you—she's proud."

"All the same I shall have the relations arrange something for her—it can be put up for her for when she's old."

She gazed at him in wondering admiration, this strange new man-of-the-world brother of hers, who could deal with relations and make business arrangements in so purposeful a manner.

It was decided that, as in dilemma to her employers, Fieola would have to work another full week at the hotel. Hugh should go home in advance of her; he would call in and see their brothers at Chesham before he was way out.

"Perhaps you could persuade them to leave the religious life and come back home," Fieola said, wistfully.

"I doubt it. I doubt even if it would be fair to try to persuade them—our right, either."

"Perhaps," she sighed.

But in the story, she thought, they were all too united in the end, and everything had come true in the end.....

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VI. THE FORT SWISS

WHEN HUGH stood again on the heathery land above Lough Star it seemed to him that his whole being knelt down and gave praise to God in a passion of gratitude and humility. To be home again—to know such riches, which he had done nothing to deserve—which, indeed, he did not in that degree, since he had deserted his father and the land, the trivial reasons of anger and resentment. Well might his father have considered him, like the prodigal son in the Scriptures, no more worthy to be called his son, but like the father of that prodigal son he had forgiven, and received him back with more than generosity. I was young and headstrong and selfish, Hugh thought, with deep sadness, how shall I bear this burden of remorse?

"By being worthy, now, to be your father's son," Father Mulvey, the parish curate, to whom he took his spiritual burden, told him. "By proving to your father now that he has gone from you in the flesh that his trust in you, which was never destroyed, was not misplaced. Your father was known as the hardest working man in the district, and despite his occasional little fish-day lapses"—Father Mulvey smiled tolerantly at the memory—"was respected by everyone for miles around. Let the name be said of his son."

"I will try to make it so, Father," Hugh promised, and then he added, eagerly, "Would you ever come and give the house and land your blessing on their new life—when my sister comes, perhaps?"

"I will, my son. Go in peace."

Hugh went in peace—in a peace he had not known since he had left home.

Frieda arrived, and the following day Father Mulvey kept his word and came too, and when was told in a kitchen scrubbed and scoured until it shone from floor to ceiling; a few of the neighbours came in, and the priest stayed in breakfast. Frieda moved about between the table and fireplace, filling the tripod, passing plates, radiant as a bride.

In Hugh's manner there was a quiet self-confidence, a certainty, which the dreaming boy, romantically in love with a boat, had never possessed. It seemed to Father Mulvey that there was a new lightness and sweetness in the house which was like a token of God's blessing upon it, and which it had not known since the gentle Eva had died. A little red lamp burned under a moulding of the Sacred Heart above the mantelpiece; daffodils and narcissi stood in a jug on the windowsill, against a background of sunny wet curtains; the stone floor had been scrubbed, the walls newly white-washed; a portable good point of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour offered a warm glow of gold and red, dark blue and green, upon the wall facing the fireplace; the long table had been laid with a white cloth, heavily embroidered, which Eva had brought to the house as a wedding-gift from her mother; all was fair and good, and somehow radiant; all was consecrated in blessedness and light.

In this way, with God's blessing upon it, began the new life in the Stewar house above Lough Shee. Hugh put all the money he had saved in England into the place, repairing, replacing, improving, and already within a few months of his return people were beginning to say that Hugh Stewar was the hardest-working man in the district, and the 'Stewar place' was considered the best-kept and the best-run for miles around.

Floola worked as hard as her brother, contriving to keep the house quiet and still that time by diligent work and care, and to help on the land with the hay, the milking, and all else. People began to speculate as to when and whom she would marry, and when Hugh would be bringing a wife home, and who the lucky girl might be—for it was nowhere denied that wherever became Mrs. Hugh Stewar would have done well for herself with a handsome, strong, hard-working, and comfortably-off husband.

But neither Hugh nor Floola had any such idea in their minds nor any such inclinations in their hearts. Their hearts flowed with love; there was in neither of them anything cold or shut-away or closed to giving. They loved God, and each other, their brothers, their home, their daily toil, and all the wild beauty and deep peace of the Lough Shee country; bog and mountain and water, whether it was lashed by roaring Atlantic gales, whipped by slanting rains, or misted in an endless soft-sweeping rain, or whether it was the landscape of a dream, blue and gold and brown, with strange ice-green and heather-purple shadows on the water, and held in an unearthly light in which every white-washed cottage was luminous and detached from reality. All this they loved, and the

love irradiated their lives, and it was a love not less warm and satisfying for being selfless and impersonal.

Now they were alone, not merely as brother and sister, but as the twin soul each of the other. And each thought that it would not be possible to feel such friendship and tenderness and closeness in any romantic, passionate love, and each felt that such love was no more for them than it was for Pidrulp and Eamon, and that there was no deprivation, but, on the contrary, nothing but enrichment in the fact.

Yet for all the peace and satisfaction of the days Finola was not completely content. They were still only two who should be four; one had returned to the shelter of her wings, but two still were left off, and she needed them again under her feathers for life to be rounded and complete. For this she grieved continuously. And was it not the true ending of the story of the children of Lir, whose descendants, it seemed, they so strangely were?

Sometimes when the island people were returning from the town, struggling singing and laughing along the road down to the jetty, their faces glowing with the sunset, Finola would feel suddenly restless and vaguely sad. These people were rough and simple, but their lives had unity and purpose. They had family lives—parents, husbands, wives, children, with mutual responsibility. She and Hugh, it would seem to her then, lived only for themselves, and again and again the thought would come to her—If only Pidrulp and Eamon were with us then, we too would be a family, a community; and perhaps one of them would marry, and there would be children about the house again. Sometimes she would think that there was no real life in a house unless there were children in it; then in their rushing

energy, their shouts, cries, laughter, you would feel the throbs and pulses of life. Their house was so close, the island thick, standing at the door and listening to the voices of the Islanders receding into the distance, and the quietness closing in again with the fading light. For a long time the voices would carry across the water as the boats put out from the jetty, and there would be something mournful in the dying fall of those human cries—gay, careless, foolish—melting into the sunset. It was as though with the last lost fading cry life went from the narrow strip of land, and would not return until children's voices called again upon it in the morning.

There were means on the island that year of Michael Palmer's death, and Finola watched them moving among the blacks, from the high spring tides to the high September tides, and she would be sad because there were never more than two. The speckles on wounded her. There were two where should be four.

Then on a mellow day towards the end of the year, when the air was soft and warm as spring, and the water smooth as glass, four swans came sailing from some hidden sanctuary in the islands. Finola stood with Hugh at the brow of their hilly land and together they watched them gliding like four white-collared yachts over the shining water.

"Four!" she cried triumphantly. "All this time only two, but now four! Michael and Eamon will surely be coming back to us now!"

Hugh looked at his sister's radiant face, and his own was sad.

"We cannot believe that, now," he said. "They are lost four years. How can Michael and Eamon be coming

know? They had a vacation and will follow it to the end. We have no reason to believe otherwise."

The strands of her red hair blew about her face, veiling her eyes, but he saw the tightening of her mouth, the nobly lifted of her head.

"They will come," she insisted.

Hugh thought no more about it; Finola was given to fearful notions, and a little he was inclined to frown upon them as romantic nonsense—even as childish superstition.

But Finola continued to watch the coast, and to believe.

And a few days before Christmas, without warning, Paddy and Emma came walking over the postoffice road and in at the gate between the meadows and hickory hedges, and up past the rambler-rose pergola to the front door. They walked into the kitchen, dark in their plainly black clothes, but their faces shining.

Finola came in through the back door, her arms full of kindling wood, as they came in at the front. She stared a moment, uttered a cry of joy, dropped the kindling and ran to them.

"I knew you would come!" she cried. "I told Hugh you would come—that we should be four again! That the whole story had to come true!"

They embraced her in turn and she drew chairs up to the fire for them and ran to call Hugh.

When they were all gathered round the fire she said, her face radiant, "Now we can have Christmas together—a real family Christmas! We will light red candles in every window every night from Christmas Eve until Twelfth Night, and we will have a little tree with tinsel all

stresses and little coloured candles, and we will have all the children of the neighbourhood in——"

Then an awareness of something in their faces made her stop. Pielraig and Eamon gazed into the fire-smelling, silent, and there was no light in their faces any more. When she broke off so abruptly Eamon looked up. He looked at her sadly, and he said:

"Finola, we have not come home. We came only to say Good-bye. We are going-overseas and we shall be away for two years or more. We were given this permission to come and say Good-bye."

Hugh laid a hand on her shoulder, compassionately.

"It is as I told you it would be, *agrá*," he said, gently.

She gazed from one to the other of them, bewildered, her eyes dark and wild with bewilderment and pain.

Pielraig looked up then, with his old charming smile.

"We are all together again," he insisted. "United in the grace of God! Now if we never meet again on this earth we shall still never be separated in spirit. But by the grace of God we shall meet again. We shall all pray for each other, and have faith." He turned his gentle smile, their mother's smile, on Hugh. "Isn't that so? Isn't that what our sister must believe?"

"It is, *eo*," Hugh said—lightly, for his sister's pain weighed on his heart.

After a moment Finola said, and her voice was flat and dead, "Then the story is not to come true after all?"

"Our sister believed our story would end the same as the story of the Children of Lir," Hugh explained. "So much of it has been the same—she thought the end must be."

THE WILD SWANS

Eamon said, eagerly, "But it is the same! In the legend the children of his were converted to Christianity when the holy Patrick came to Ireland, and all four found peace. It's had the good fortune to be born into the faith, and to make the story come true it needed only that Pidgey and I should make our special contribution to it. Ah, be happy for us, Finola, for all of us, for isn't all very well with us that we are met now, all four of us, like this, on the threshold of Christmas, here in our faith, and with love and peace in our hearts?" He took her hands and brought her, "Isn't it well with us, Finola, again?"

Her hands tightened on his and though her eyes were filled with tears she smiled and said, sweetly, "It is well with us."

After that they talked no more of separations but laid the table with the best cloth and the best doll, and sat down to a meal together with a special treat of blurring.

When the time came for Pidgey and Eamon to go they all went out at the back of the house to the coast of the land where it sloped down to the bay. Only in the early morn'g was there any feeling of winter. The air was mild, and the Western sky, banked with clouds, was like a brilliant tap of crimson and gold. Far out, along the estuary, there was the white line of the Atlantic breakers round the islands, and the distant sound of their drumming against rocks and cliffs. All in the West, sea and sky was a wild savage splendour. But on the estuary, facing South, all was peace and calm. The water in mid-stream marked the red-gold after-glow of sunset, shimmering into shadow under the land, and already a half-moon climbed the climbing sky. The four mounds, luminously white, dotted slowly upon the darkening water. There was the

and, but cry of curious, and the thin, rasping whiling of myon-machon.

Pickling and Karon gazed long and intently, as though they would absorb all this peace and beauty into themselves. Both knew that those few moments of farewell would dwell in their hearts for ever. They felt within themselves that the beauty of the world had made them sad, and the loss came into the minds of both, but they did not voice them, only Karon murmured, almost lamely, "This beautiful land!"

Flask stood on a hillside, a little higher than her two younger brothers, an arm round the shoulder of each; Hugh stood close at her side. She was the sister-queen upon the Sea Road, but now with her breast safely under her wings, and peace and a sense of completion, of fulfillment, flowed in her. This moment, the hour, would be remembered forever.

When they turned back to the house, and passed out on to the road beyond, there was peace and acceptance in her heart. Now she could say, in fulness of spirit, "They will be done."

They walked westward along the peninsula to where the little narrow road joined the main road, together. Flask walked between Pickling and Karon as on that evening years ago, when they had gone out homeward under her maternal wings. There had been scars then, upon the water. All three recalled that evening, though none of them spoke of it; yet each was the scene of communion between them that each knew it was in the minds—and hearts—of the others.

At the cross-roads they turned and faced each other.

"There's no point in coming farther," Hugh said.

The others agreed, and in turn Pakeny and Eamon embraced their sister and shook hands with their brother.

"God go with you," Finola said, smiling, and without more.

"God stay with you," they replied, fervently.

"We'll meet again," Finola said.

"God willing," they answered her.

Then they had turned the corner into the main road, and, as it seemed to Finola, into the main-stream of life, and she and Hugh were walking back across the peninsula—into the back-water that was their life.

They faced into the sunset, and the glow of it was on their faces. Hugh slipped an arm through hers.

"God is good," he said, simply.

She pressed his arm in answer and they walked on in silence, peace in their hearts.

As they came near to the house the rooms suddenly rose up from the shadowy water, higher and higher, until they leaped into the sky.

ENCHANTMENT

Based on

The Working of Entha

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I. ELAINÉ AND JOSE

THE MARRIAGE of Elainé Carbery to Major 'Jock' Lawson was as romantic as a fairy-tale, but was nevertheless founded upon lay Irish tradition. The Carberys were an old West of Ireland family—indeed the first Carbery, son of King Cormac, had been King of Ireland somewhere around A.D. 500 . . . which made any English aristocratic claims to antiquity hardly worth mentioning. At least in the opinion of the Carberys.

Elainé was born and lived all the twenty-three years of life, until she met Jose at the Dublin Horse Show, in a big, damp, dark-old house in the West beside a lake hemmed in with dark trees on one side and dark hills on the other. The house was ancient, dating north. Generations of Carberys had lived there—in a poverty which somehow contrived to be stately, with old and useful servants, marble floors, and a towering pride—and loved it. Elainé's father Michael—he preferred the Irish spelling—was a Charlie wheeler; he did not say much about it, spending most of his time fishing in the lake, or shooting wild ducks, but what little he did was done with an air of distinction, so that his few words carried weight. All that

he did was reminded with an air, as befits the descendant of an ancient king.

Mrs. Cluskey had died whilst Elaine was a baby; her only child had been brought up by a series of house-keepers, and her education had been at the hands of the Benedictine nuns at an Abbey a few miles away. The Abbey was dark, with thick woods sloping down to it behind, and thickly wooded grounds surrounding it, and on all sides the great bare hills, so that all Elaine's background was of dark woods, shadowy waters, and craggy hills.

She did not lead a lonely life with her widowed father, for the old house was always full of young relations, who came from Dublin and Galway for the shooting and fishing, and because the old house was anywhere the family 'place' and it was natural to go there. There as she grew up Elaine herself was part of the attraction for the male relations, particularly for the young ones, for she was quite extraordinarily beautiful.

She was possessed of a beauty not common in those parts, for her hair was as yellow as water-lilies, and the bloom of her eyes remarkable even in a land of blue-eyed people, for they were of a curious Spanish blue, dark yet vivid. Her skin was very pale, and her features, and her hands and feet, very fine; there was great sweetness and gentleness in her face and manner, and this, combined with her pallor, made her seem curiously remote and off-the-earth—as though she had stepped from a fairy land into a world in which people came and went noisily, boisterously, with muddy boots and a smell of horse on their clothes, and their hair wet with rain—a world of machinists, fishing-liners, rubbers, and heavy

silver gleaming in the light of oil-lamps against darkened walls blackened with damp. Some of the more sophisticated couples declared that her beauty was 'pure pre-Raphaelite', and declared that she looked all wrong in the drab and jellidays in which she was chiefly to be seen, and should wear cloaks and muslin dresses, and her yellow hair in long braids in her hair.

But despite all this fuss, amazingly beauty Elaine could manage a horse, or a boat, or a gun, as expertly as any of her male cousin. With the possible exception of Elton O'Malley. But then he was a quite exceptional person—even among the exceptional Carbys. He had a growing reputation in Dublin both as poet and painter, had some talent as an actor in the smaller theatres which were producing the most interesting work, and it was told of him that there was no one to touch him on a horse or as a crack shot. He was good-looking and gay and popular, and it was generally assumed that being wife a second-cousin he and Elaine would eventually marry. Nothing could be more suitable.

On more suitable than the marriage she did make—with the English army officer twenty years older than herself—a middle-aged man of another country, and a Protestant at that.

Michael Carby had an intense dislike of any and everything English. Were not the English the ancient enemies of Ireland? Were they not irreligious, materialist, pagans, even? To be sure this English soldier did not look forty-three; he did not look more than thirty-five; he was good-looking, even distinguished looking—Michael had no remedy than—with his dark hair graying at the temples, and there was nothing but goodness in his face—

Michael had no doubts that, too, there was colour, intelligence, generosity, kindness in the face. He had, also, modest manners, charm, and was a great deal better off than the Carlops. He was, Michael acknowledged, a 'gentleman'. But when all that was acknowledged the fact remained that he was English—and a Protestant. And what had to do with an Irish Catholic family as the Carlops to do with English Protestants?

Well, it seemed, they had this to do with them—that one of them had fallen in love with one, and since her heart was set on marrying him, and she was of age, there was nothing, unfortunately, which could be done about it. A Catholic wedding was most willingly agreed to by Major Lamont, and the upbringing of any children of the marriage in the Catholic faith . . . which was the objection of the Lamont family to the wedding. Until then no Lamont had been so misguided as to marry a Papist.

Elaine had never been in love with anyone until she met Jack. She saw him first in the paddock at the Horse Show, standing beside the big strawberry man on which he had won the high-jumping contest. She thought she had never seen anyone, not even Liam, ride as he rode. Such action, such poise! She thought she had never known anything, no music, no poetry, so beautiful, so exciting. She was still flushed with the excitement of it when several friends introduced him to the paddock.

"You were wonderful," she cried to him. "wonderful!" her enthusiasm completely disposing of doubts or self-consciousness.

Major Lamont, looking at her glowing face and shining eyes, thought he had never in his previous years of varied and intensive living in various parts of the world

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soon anything as beautiful as that flushed, radiant young girl. She was in Dublin all that week with her father and what seemed to him a whole lotter of relatives, mostly brothers, heavy made men—the only comfortable one of whom, it seemed to him, was the good-looking, fair-haired one they called Liam. That one struck him as interesting-looking and 'different'. He continued to entertain Elaine and her father and cousin to luncheon and dinner, arranged a dinner, and then after these various occasions finally kidnapped Elaine for a drive out of Dublin into the Wicklow hills. He looked all three of them, arrived at the hotel as late as early, asked for Elaine, apologized for being early, and suggested she should drive round St. Stephen's Green and talk to him while they waited for the others. She smiled and said, "Why not?" He drove her once round St. Stephen's Green and then headed out of town.

"Where are we off to?" she asked, when she realized that they were not returning to the hotel house.

"We're heading in the country, you and I alone," he told her. "Do you mind?"

"But we can't! Daddy and Liam are waiting for us! We must go back at once."

She was distressed.

"They won't be waiting for an hour yet, and when we're really well out of town I'll telephone them and tell them I've kidnapped you till the evening!"

"But why—why?"

"Because I'm in love with you and tired of moving you in a crowd! Do you mind?"

She did not know whether she 'minded' or not. She only knew that with his words her heart quickened with a

kind of painful joy, and that her blood melted—in when she had seen him ride.

They lunched at the hotel at Glendough, walked beside the lake, then drove over the high green hills, and when they returned to town in the evening announced their engagement. When they had walked beside the lake they had stood a little time listening to the silence, absorbing the peace and the beauty, and he had said, "Is it not an ancient Irish belief that the place of revelation of poetry and magic is beside water?"

She nodded, for she had heard this said, had a sense of destiny was upon her and she had no words.

"There is certainly magic and poetry in this place, but there was enchantment in the first moment of our meeting—did you feel it?"

He took her hands then and drew her close to him, and it seemed to her that enchantment closed round her, in a blue and gold mantle of lake and sky and sunshine. She had a feeling of having lived all her life in a dim green twilight, and of only now emerging into the sunlight of the full, free day.

She was immensely happy. She had the sense of moving in a dream, in which everything outside of Josie and herself was unreal. Her father was indignant and angry; of all the wrongs England had ever done in Ireland this was the most infamous. He told Josie that he was a card, and Elsie that she must be mad. Josie smiled, amiably, and maintained that he was merely his prospective father-in-law took that view, and could only hope that time would demonstrate the error of it. As much as anything Michael was outraged by the fact that his prospective son-in-law was only five years younger than himself. The whole in

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thing was preposterous, entirely. What was even more preposterous was that Elaine proposed to marry her fiancé as soon as ever it could be arranged. He thought Liam to try and bring Elaine to her senses.

Liam shrugged. "What is the use?" he demanded. "She is bewitched. She'll come to her senses only when the spell breaks. And it will."

"That's exactly why we must break it now—before it's too late!"

"We can't. She's moved into a world beyond our reach already. But one day she'll come back. People can't live out of their own world. Not people like Elaine."

And he thought, suddenly, of a fish gasping for air at the bottom of a boat.

To Elaine, he said, "You are making a terrible mistake. We Irish cannot live away from where we belong."

She smiled, dreamily.

"They do."

"In the end they always come back. Those that don't die—in captivity."

She smiled, still.

"You've never been in love, Liam, you don't understand!"

He gave her a curious look and was silent. There was nothing more to say.

EL. ELLEN AND ALLEN

DESPITE THE initial prejudice against his Irish Catholic marriage Josie's family acknowledged that his bride was a charming girl, and quite extraordinarily fascinating. The fact that she 'made to boards', and did it extremely well, was of course a point in her favour.

Ellen, who had always been a little humiliated in Dublin, was completely overwhelmed by what seemed to her the roaring inferno of London. But she liked her tall narrow town house in a quiet square, the most efficient servants, the complete absence of damp—and the fact that she now had money of her own, and more than she needed. She never quite got used to the fact that when she saw a pretty thing in a shop—a dress or a hat or a trinket—there was nothing to stop her going in and buying it. She found herself in possession of things she had never dreamed she could possess—furs, jewellery, dresses, and lovely things to wear in the house. There was one thing in particular which she liked—and which Josie had chosen for her, a green and gold brocade housetop, clinging to her slim body, but flaring from the hips and flowing away in a train, with wide sleeves that fell back over her pale arms.

"Yes," said Josie, smiling, the first time she wore it to
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their London home, "you look like Edda in *The Immortal Hour*!"

She did not know anything about *The Immortal Hour*, but she knew the ancient legend of Edda of the Shet, who married the mortal King Esley, and was banished back to Fairy-land by her drinking the poison Mistle. . . .

"I hope I am not cast for the role of Edda," she said. "She deserved her lead most amply!"

"If any of your high-born kinsmen come near I will refuse them admittance," he declared.

She laughed.

"Even Liam?"

"Liam most of all. He has the most alien."

"I think nothing will lure Liam to England. He shares my father's view that the English are barbarians."

In addition to the town house she found herself the mistress of a stately yellow Regency house in the West country—with a pillared porch and an ancient cedar tree spreading its dark branches over the traditional immaculate English lawn. Here she had good hunters and good hawking, and here she felt again that she could breathe. She began spending more and more of her time here, and Jack, who was tied to the War Office during the week, would come at the week-ends.

They entertained the county people, and sometimes Jack brought visitors with him from London. Elaine neither liked nor disliked the friends and relatives she was called upon to play hostess to. They were amiable; they liked to ride, shoot, fish, and so forth she understood them. But in another sense they were alien to her; they were not her people; they spoke a different kind of English, had a different kind of outlook; they did not know Ireland as

Jodie knew it, and their attitude to Ireland and the Irish, she discerned, was inclined to be patronising; they were 'the mad Irish', the 'dirty Irish', the 'backward Irish'; at best they were the wild crazy Irish. They told her they loved her "tanger", and after that she went silent on them.

As time went on she had fits of homesickness, when she longed for the sound of an Irish voice, the high cheek-boned Irish face with the molasses blue Irish eyes. She longed for the smell of a turf fire, and the red hot cry of a cuckoo. She longed for the sight of a great brown bog, grey heathers, blue hills, the wild West wind tearing in from the Atlantic, the driving showers, or the soft weeping rain. The English countryside seemed dull and lifeless, with the low hills, neat fields, thin hedges. Oh, for a rough stone wall and a crimson cascade of furze above it! Sometimes the nostalgia turned in her like a physical sickness.

Of the many visitors who came to the house there was only one for whom she felt affection, and that was Jodie's younger brother, Allen.

He was thirty, and had rebelled against the family tradition of either going into the family banking business or into the army. Having flatly refused to go into the bank he had been sent from Paris to Switzerland—from which he had run away. Deeply shocked his father had allotted him a small allowance—too small, as Allen complained, to live on in even moderate comfort, but enough to prevent him taking a job. He lived in a bed sitting-room in London and played the literary dilettante—doing it just sufficiently successfully enough to be able, as he put it, to spread a little jam on his daily bread. By which he meant drink the odd cocktail in the latest meeting bar. . . .

He had Josie's looks and charm, but to a lesser degree, and was very well aware that he was only an echo of his more distinguished-looking and much more charming brother. This knowledge made him fall back on his intellectual superiority, and he was a little consoled, his manner to his brother a little condescending. Josie was aware of this, but it merely amused him, and he enjoyed playing the rough uneducated professional soldier to his intellectual literary brother. He felt gradually sorry for his brother, who was too intellectual, sensitive and egotistic to have much success with women, and who suffered from not having as much money as he would like; he therefore did not grudge him his compensatory superiority. He himself had such riches—he had Elaine as his wife. He could, he felt, afford to be generous. He therefore urged his brother to come to the house whenever he felt inclined, not wait to be invited.

Allen came shortly after his brother's marriage out of curiosity to see 'the wild Irish girl'.

She was wearing the green-and-gold brocade house-gown the first time he saw her, and he thought he had never seen anything, living or painted, so beautiful. He felt that he knew for the first time what the term 'breath-taking' meant. Occasionally at the ballet he had experienced intense aesthetic pleasure in female beauty, but never as he felt it when Elaine first stood before him, a symphony, as it seemed to him, in green and white and gold. That wonderful hair coiled in those heavy curls round the small beautiful head. Those inimitable eyes that really were hypnotic. He felt that he could never gaze enough. But it was more than physical, he thought; there was a quality of strangeness about her—as though

she had stepped into the present—and really rather frightful—twentieth-century world from God knows what fairy-lands before. Certainly the opened magic came from in himself. He felt he knew for the first time the meaning of the word 'enchantment'. Like very simplicity fascinated him. She was something quite new in his complicated, torn-out—and torn-out—world. Ah, but the war torn-out, too, for he could not get her out of his mind, day or night. He could not sleep, he could not work, he was utterly obsessed by her. He went back to London only to return next day to the country, and then he could not bring himself to leave, and he stayed the week, not sharing in any of the activities of the other guests, sleeping and eating very little, and 'sitting out and in, walking with her, with the eyes of her, the hair of her, the little chin, the little side-of-chaos round her mouth'. . . .

At the end of two months he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and Elaine was much concerned about him.

"It's just nervous—these intellectuals make you go in for it," Julie assured her cheerfully. "It's a way of attracting attention to themselves—putting them in a class above the common run of unenlightened human beings, particularly professional soldiers. . . . What he really wants is for you to go and sit by his bed and hold his hand, and then he'll probably weep all over you and suffer exquisitely and enjoy himself too—and his real trouble is that he's lonely and frustrated and hasn't enough to occupy him."

Elaine considered Julie's judgment harsh—and even materialistic. It was obvious that Allen was at least five times the self-confident, untroubled, contented Julie, and the day she found the young man leaning on the balcony at

of the terrace looking sadly depressed she went over to him and laid a hand on his arm and asked him gently what was worrying him.

The first he turned to her was haggard.

"I'm not worried," he said, violently. "I'm merely sick. With the deadliest kind of sickness!" And then, suddenly in spite of himself, in spite of his greater sorrow, quoted from the *Maritani* play—

'And when I asked the sick man
Of what he was to die—
'Of loving you, of loving you!
The sick man made reply.'

She stared at him, troubled.

"Not me?" she whispered, a little feebly.

"Yes, you, my brother's wife! I ought to go back to London but I haven't the strength! What are you going to do with me, for God's sake?"

"I don't know. I wish I did. Oh, Allen, I'm so sorry—I'm so terribly sorry!"

She felt that she would weep; that she would do anything, if only he would stop looking so distressed, stop being so terribly unhappy. It was intolerable. She felt such an awful tenderness for him, such a boundless compassion. That any human being should suffer such torment over her was not to be borne.

He raised her hands, then, and his eyes, sudden and feverish from lack of sleep, burned upon her.

"Come to my room tonight," he brought her, wildly. "Let me at least feel your arms round me—let me sleep just for this one night, then I will perhaps have the strength to go back to London tomorrow."

She brushed back the hair from his brow, gently, caressingly.

"I will come," she promised, as a mother promises a child. "And now could you not go and lie down and try to get a little rest? I could have dinner sent to your room. . . ."

"You are so good," he said humbly. "You give me peace already."

Else she hardly knew to what she had committed herself. That he should be her lover was unthinkable. But if holding him in her arms for a little she could give him peace of flesh and spirit, could restore sleep to him, it seemed better to do.

But she was deeply troubled. She wished that it were not mid-week but the weekend, so that Jack would be there—she had a sudden longing for his good-natured conversation. If Jack were here it would not be possible to do as Ellen wanted. She went down from the terrace and crossed the great sweep of lawn and came to a stream which bounded the grounds at one side. Willows trailed their long green hair in the water, and there was a sweetness of meadow-sweet and wild mint that reminded her of the Irish bog. She sat down under a willow and gazed at the water, and Liam came into her mind, and the old sorrows returned with Liam, her heart cried, *Liam!* If only you had wished me to live I would never have left our beautiful land, and Ellen would not suffer like this, and I would not have to be so frightened of this coming night. I could have loved you, Liam, but I was not awake. If it had been you who had taken me for that drive to Glendalough how different this whole story might have been! O Liam, my darling one, I think if you

stood before me now and said 'Come! I would go with you—anywhere to be away from here! Up the side of water poetry and magic can be revealed.' If only it were true—if only you could come to me now, beside this water! But in this country there is no lake poetry, and no one believes in magic. . . .

She stayed a long time by the lake stream; but only her body was there; her spirit was back among the logs and boulders, the shadowy waters and the blue hills mixed with the blue roll-rim, back in the dark old house, with the mirror silver glimmering against a red damask background blackened with damp, back with her father, doing nothing much, but doing it with an air; back with Liam, who did everything, with a gay inconsequence—Liam who seemed to move in an aura of golden light in a dark world.

Allen did not come down for dinner, so as there were no other guests she had her own in her room, and then, when it began to be dark, resolutely went out and along the corridor to Allen's room. She had a feeling that it would all somehow be easier before darkness set in. It was somehow important that it should not be a deed of darkness.

She knocked on the door, her heart beating painfully, but there was no answer. When after knocking a second time, more loudly, there was still no answer she thought that perhaps he had fallen asleep. She turned the handle softly and peeped into the room. Then she entered it, lightly, for it was unoccupied. She took a step forward to her bedchamber and then in the middle of the bed saw a sheet of paper. She picked it up and carried it to the window to read it.

Reggie says, Elsie [he had written], I had no right to ask what I did, and I have gone. This afternoon seemed to be a while in the long night; now the floor has gone from me and I am whole again. I love you now as I should love you—as my sister, as my brother's dear and beautiful wife. The black spell is broken and I am free.

Elsie.

She went out of the room and back down the corridor to her own, but now she was even more troubled than before. The strange feeling she had had since, by the little stream, came back to her. Now everything was Liam again; his presence seemed almost tangibly there, like the sweetest scent of jasmine from the open windows. Suddenly in her mind she heard his voice, low, musical, with a catch of laughter in it, and when she closed her eyes she saw him very clearly—slight, slender, always in sailing clothes, and always laughing. Liam, her heart cried, in its despair, why did you ever let me go from our own beautiful land? Why didn't you claim me for yourself? Before it was too late? Liam, come to me; I need you. . . .

III. FATHER AND SON

SHE DID not write to Liam. The intensity of the *seem* of longing left her. But the strange feeling which the Allen interlude had filled her remained with her. She tried to reason with herself—the young man had been interested, and the information had passed, as such things do. Why then this persistent feeling of some strange force in her life—as though she had indeed put an evil spell upon him, and it had been broken from outside by some power controlling her destiny?

Her father-confessor to whom she took these heart-searchings warned against superstitious belief and counselled a greater devotion to the Rosary. He was aware of the special Irish devotion to the Rosary, and believed that she was suffering from the spiritual deprivation of being cut off from her own land and her own people for whom, as he had once read, 'God was nearer than the dove'. He also suggested, rightly, that she was left too much alone on the one hand, and on the other too much surrounded by people not of her own fashion.

The morbid mood which followed Allen's departure was dissolved when she found she was to have a child. She was as happy as the prospect that she did not mind whether it was a boy or a girl. Jack hoped for a girl as

that when Eileen's own youth had passed he might see it reflected in his daughter. He had his wish; when the time came, without difficulty or undue calling, Elaine gave birth to a girl.

For a year after that she was absorbed in the fascinating novelty of being a mother. Just several times suggested that she should go on a visit to her beloved Ireland, but this idea she always rejected. "It would be fatal," she declared, "I would never come back!"

"Not even if you knew I was waiting for you here?"

She looked troubled.

"I don't know, Once I was back there——"

"It's could go together," he suggested.

"I might flee away into the hills!" She laughed, but her manner was nervous and restless.

When he had leave they went instead to Scotland, to the Western Highlands. Which was a mistake, because looking out across the Western Isles she looked across to Ireland, and there was sufficient similarity in the wild bare hills, the same walks, and the Celtic atmosphere, to revive the old nostalgia. It was early autumn, too, and the purple of the heather on the moor reminded her of the heather on the bogs.

When Christmas came her thoughts went back to her father's house. There would be tall lighted red candles in all the windows, and there would be a Christmas tree cut from the surrounding woods. The house would be full of the cousins from Dublin and Galway. Liam would be there, and whatever the weather they would have the heat out, and the horses. . . .

There was a house full of people in her husband's home—for she never thought of it as hers—and the bright

cold biting weather. There was a Christmas tree in the panelled hall, and holly everywhere, and vases of huge white chrysanthemums from the hothouses in the grounds, and tall sprays of white lilac which Josie had had sent from London.

Christmas morning was bright and clear, and the younger guests proposed to go riding instead of sleeping off the heavy mid-day traditional meal. Josie decided to join them, refusing to be middle-aged. Elaine felt inclined to sit on the terrace in the sun, with the child in her perambulator beside her; she welcomed the opportunity to be alone.

What she saw there, demanding of Ireland, it seemed to her that she saw Liam come walking up the drive. Liam wearing an almanac's leather coat with a fur collar over his usual riding kit, and swinging a pale of goggles; Liam horse-headed, his fair hair shining in the pale winter sun. It could not be Liam . . . and yet it was Liam; not the Liam of her constant dreams, but Liam living and real. She rose to her feet and moved like one in a trance down the steps to meet him.

Then she was clinging to him, feeling the warmth of his hands, the coldness of the leather coat against her cheek, and crying to him, "How did you get here? Why didn't you let us know you were coming?"

"I didn't know I was coming till a few hours ago. I flew."

"You flew? From Dublin?"

"No, from your father's house—that is to say I sneaked in the car from there to the airfield. But perhaps you didn't know I have a 'plane! I got lost over Wales, so I'd have been here earlier. I wanted to be here for the

Christmas dinner! You're looking more beautiful than ever! Are you pleased to see me?"

"Pleased? Oh, Liam?"

There was no word, but he knew that she knew as for him all the misty trees were hung with silver bells.

When the riding party came back for tea, in the early dusk, they found Elaine sitting beside the fire in the hall with a fair-haired, slim young man with eyes almost as blue as her own. She introduced him as her cousin Liam O'Malley from Ireland.

"He flew over," she explained to Julia. "In his own 'plane."

"Since when have you grown wings, young man?" Julia demanded, laughing.

"Since Elaine became a mother. One has to do something!"

They all laughed.

"Stay with us as long as you please," Julia said. "We were expecting my brother, but at the last minute he decided to do what he calls escape the English Christmas and went to Paris, so you fill the gap for us!"

"Elaine thinks I came for her," Liam said, "but I really came to get a good game of chess."

Julia laughed. "Delighted—Mall!"

"We know our Irish legends, I say," Liam murmured, and his voice was mocking. He added, "Very well. King Tochar, what shall the stakes be?"

"Don't you remember?" Julia's voice was mocking now.

"I remember very well."

"Very well. There's a fine old chestnut in the

library. Shall we go? It's warm—there's been a fire in there all day. Are you coming, Elaine?"

"No, I want to spend a little time in the nursery before dressing for dinner."

Joan and Liam went off to the library, and Elaine went slowly up the wide staircase. She could not remember what happened when Brian's shining kiltmen played King Eochy chess. She could not remember who won, or what the stakes were. In the library there were no doubt books in which she could look up the ancient tale, but she could not bring herself to go there.

Why had Liam come? She could hardly believe it was to play chess with Joan—brilliantly as he played it. She felt troubled and restless. It was wonderful that Liam had come. But why—why? What was behind the impulse which made him take to the air and feed his way across all Ireland, and the sea, and half of England, to be with her? It was a completely crazy thing to have done; but that was nothing against it—when you considered all the sadness, and even actual unhappiness, created in the world by the sensible people who never did crazy things. Perhaps, she reflected, climbing up to the top of the old house, if the world were turned over for a time to the crazy people it might be a happier place. . . .

A host of an English poem came into her head—

"Woe and woe and woe and woe it was,
But O, how it was sweet!"

When she came down for dinner, a little early, a number of the guests were standing round the fire in the hall drinking sherry. Joan and Liam were among them.

Everyone wore evening clothes, but Liam was still in the clothes in which he had been seen.

"I brought nothing with me," he explained. "We'd just got to from a ride when it came to me that I must rush out to the stable and take to the air and try to get here. If the smell of turf and horses on me is too much I could always put on my rain!"

"We love you as you are," Elaine told him, and not knowing that she did so stroked the rough tweed of his jacket. She added, smiling, "What wins the game?"

"We played three," he told her, "and I have to confess I lost the last!"

"He wasn't trying," Jack said.

"What were the rules?"

"Anything I like to command I do for I've not thought of anything!"

"You could command him to sing to us after dinner," Elaine suggested.

Jack laughed. "I could—and I do!"

Liam bowed. "What else?"

"That you ride with us in the morning, and play another game with me after lunch."

"Good. And the rules?"

"As before. Whatever the winner chooses!"

"You're not afraid I might win the fourth game?"

"Why should I be?"

Liam did not answer; a servant approached with a tray of drinks and he helped himself, then raised his glass to his host and hostess.

"Cheers!"

"Cheers again! Cheers again!" they gave him back.

At dinner he was strangely silent. Elaine, watching

him, thought: He doesn't belong here, any more than I do. From time to time during the dinner and laughter, which intensified as the glasses were exchanged, their eyes met across the table; once he smiled at her, and his eyes held hers for several seconds, and it was as though he had understood her, and she knew the sensation of her blood surging, as with Jack beside the lake, in what seemed to her now when weeks long ago.

After dinner he sat at the piano and played and sang Irish songs, some of them in the Irish, and in some of them Elaine joined him.

She had no further opportunity of speaking to him alone, but when they parted at midnight he gave her another strange smile as he remarked to Jack, "I shall probably win tomorrow, you know."

Jack smiled good-naturally.

"You'll have to try harder than you did today!"

When Elaine had gone on up the stairs with the other guests Jack turned to Elaine.

"Now that the last guest has retired let us sit quietly together for half an hour."

"I think I would prefer to go to my room," Elaine said. "It's been a long day and I am very tired."

Jack sighed.

"As you wish. Only we never seem to be alone together nowadays, either here or in London."

"It's not I who fill the house with guests," she reminded him. "They're not my people. I wish very often we could be quietly alone together more often."

"I know. It's my fault. But this evening watching you at dinner you looked so distant at times, and it came to me we should try to be alone more."

He bowed her, tenderly.

"*Adieu Christmas, when everyone has gone, we will try to be. Good night now, my very dear.*"

"*Good night, my Love.*" But held him close to her for a moment, filled with a strange sadness. He is worthy to be loved more than I can love him, she thought, sadly; more than I have ever loved him. But there was magic and poetry beside an Irish lake, and a brief enchantment. . . .

John watched her ascend the wide staircase, beautiful in a flowing evening gown which seemed to him the colour and texture of moonlight, her yellow hair wound round her small head like a shining crown. He had no illusions; there had been a dreaming girl in love with love. But he had not been a dreaming youth, and it is one of the tragedies of mature love that it does not alter when it alteration finds.

He went into the library and poured himself out a nightcap from the collection of decanters on a side-table. He swallowed the whiskey, then searched along the shelves and took down Lecky's *Irish Rulers*, and turned the pages till he came to the story of Ennis and Mollie. He poured himself another drink, carried the book and the drink to the fire, and began to read. When he had finished the story he closed the book and replaced it on the shelves. Then he went and stood by the mantelpiece, leaning his arm along it and gazing down into the fire. On his face was an expression of deep sadness.

IV. THE LAST GAME

IN THE morning Elaine rode with them. It was a cold crisp clear day that whipped the cheeks and stung the blood. Joak gave Liam the best horse in the stable.

"Since you ride at my command, it is only just," he said.

The horse was a little Arab mare, and Joak loved her.

Liam ran his eyes over her appreciatively, and there was a light in his face when he turned to Joak.

"I wonder if you agree with me," he said, "that the three most beautiful things in the world are an Arab horse, a sailing-ship, and the woman you love?"

Joak smiled.

"I'm inclined to agree."

"But for a woman——" Elaine said.

"The third thing is her lover—obviously," Liam said, almost eagerly, and without looking at her mounted the mare.

"She has a very light mouth," Joak warned him.

Elaine said quickly, "Liam has very light hands."

Then the two and Joak mounted their horses, sur-heavy beside the little light mare, and they were off, cantering into the pale cold sunlight, across the gentle English

country-side, Liam put the mare into a gallop almost immediately and shot ahead of the party. Elaine watched him anxiously. Liam had a kind of devil in him at times—ah, but what was she worrying about? He had as intense a feeling for a horse as Josie himself had.

"Don't worry," she said to Josie, who also watched him, a little anxiously. "He won't do what you wouldn't do yourself."

"I wouldn't do what he's doing now," Josie snapped. His nerves were on edge. He had had very little sleep in the night. It seemed to him that his dreams had come close and whispered in his ear—and mocked him.

But Liam, when he was well ahead of the party, slowed the mare down to a canter, and when they came up with him she was quiet and cool, no trace of sweat on her, and Liam was smiling, contentedly.

Josie suddenly discovered that he wished the gay, good-looking, charming young man gone. All the women in the house, from the eldest to the youngest, were 'mad' about him, raving about his charm, his looks, the way he rode, the way he played and sang, and all through dinner Elaine had no eyes for anyone but this wonder of hers. Now he was out-riding them all; for, of course, there was no denying it, he rode as—Josie remembered—most of the Irish rode, as though he had been doing nothing else all his life, as naturally as he breathed. And this game they were to play this afternoon—well, anyhow, in a game of chess the winner was unpredictable . . . and there were two things that Major "Josie" Laverton reckoned to be able to do well—ride a horse, and play chess.

Liam was as interested during luncheon as during dinner the evening before he had been silent. . . . He

roomed full of some more furniture. Almost as soon as the roll-tops had been removed he looked at Joie.

"Are you ready to play?"

"Yes, Liam."

He looked at Elaine.

"You'll join us this time?"

"It's important you should," Liam urged, smiling.

"We'll all come," someone declared, and then a whole party of them moved off to the library.

Klaus sat between them, following the game, but this pale hands-clenching her shoulders, her face as pale as her hands. She had a curious, indefinable feeling of impending disaster. It seemed to her that Liam was playing carelessly, indifferently. Joie seemed to be winning, and she suddenly knew that she wanted him to win. Frowned it intensely. That the prospect of Liam winning was unthinkable. Terrifying. The stakes—what were the stakes? At the back of her mind was the feeling that they, too, were unthinkable—which was why money would not yield them up. Therefore it was unthinkable that Liam should win. Her eyes watched the board, anxiously.

A small thin smile flickered round Liam's lips; he was amused; he was enjoying himself. He played with an air of casual confidence.

Joie's brow frowned in strained concentration. He sat with his left hand to his chin, his forefinger pressed tightly against his lips. Check from one of Liam's castles. Check from the knight, with a threat to Joie's queen. . . . and so on and so on. While had come with a great host of the Siles to carry off the queen. . . .

Suddenly Liam looked up and smiled, and his smile had never been more charming. There was a kind of radiance about him.

Jack also looked up, and his face was grey and tense.

"Your game," he said, and swept his hands across the board, so that the pieces scattered and fell.

Both rose to their feet, Liam still smiling.

"You remember the rules," he said, softly.

"We played postman's knock and such games when we were children!" Jack snapped.

"But now we are not children," Liam said, gently.

He went over to Elaine and took her hands and drew her to her feet.

"Elaine," he said, very softly, still smiling, and it was as though he laid a spell upon her, so that when his arms embraced her her own arms were involuntarily round his neck, and in that room full of people it was as though they were alone behind a locked door, and as though they had lived all their lives only for that moment.

When the kiss had spent itself he held her a moment longer, gazing at her with infinite tenderness, then abruptly turned and walked out of the room. Elaine swept a look, half-faltering, and walked with the grip of Jack's hand on her arm. There were self-conscious laughs and exclamations, then Jack's voice, still decisive, "Well, now, after that bit of play-acting perhaps we can all go out and get some fresh air!"

They went out on to the terrace, Elaine still clinging, pale and dazed, to Jack's arm. On the terrace they found Liam, wearing his leather coat and swinging his goggles. His smile was as charming as ever, his manner completely self-possession.

"I'm going now," he announced. "Thank you for your hospitality—including the show! Could your chauffeur drive me to the airfield, do you think?"

"I'll drive you myself," Jack said, grimly.

Elaine came to life then, out of her trance, and the colour came faintly into her cheeks.

"I'll come too," she said quickly. "I'll finish my coat——"

They drove out to the airfield in silence, the three of them seated—at Liam's suggestion—in the front of the car, so that they sat close. Once Elaine was aware of her cousin's hand touching hers, secretly, in the folds of her fur coat.

Then she and Jack were alone in the car, watching Liam climb into the two-seater 'plane, and the machine taxi-ing across the field into the wind, then turning, its wheels folding up under it like the feet of a bird on the wing, rising into the air, higher and higher, until it was no more than a large bird—as it might be, it came to Elaine, one of the wild swans from the lake at home. . . .

On the way back Jack talked, deliberately, of other matters. Elaine made an effort to respond. Normally had somewhere to be returned. By the time they reached the house it was as though Liam had never been there. Quite exactly. Inwardly it was as though he had never gone. And that was true for both of them.

In January they returned to town, but in all the distractions of theatres, cinemas, shops, parties, people, Elaine remained pale and listless. In February they went to Paris for a few days because Jack considered that Elaine needed a 'change'. He took her to the Opera, to

expensive restaurants in the City, he bought her clothes, flowers, perfume, jewellery, and he himself had never been more love-lin. She accepted everything, from a model gown to his embraces, with an air of resignation. All she could see before her inward gaze was her cousin sliding from the deckboard, smiling, drawing her to him. All she could feel was his lips on hers; all she could hear was his low voice whispering her name. It was as though his spirit had entered into her and possessed her. As though his life had entered into her blood, like a fever.

Night and day, day and night, she heard his voice, whispering:

"Elsie! Elsie! Elsie!"

It was as though he called her; night and day; day and night; waking and sleeping.

She slept badly, ate little, and lost weight. She was alternately silent and depressed, or restless and nervy.

Joak appealed to her, desperately.

"What is the matter, Elsie? Have you something on your mind? Don't you love me any more?"

She answered him truthfully, "I have nothing on my mind. And I do love you—as I always have, and always shall."

For it was true she had nothing on her mind, because she had everything in her heart. And it was true that she loved him, and must always love him, as a mother loves a child, or a devoted sister a brother. But not as she now knew she loved Elsie, which was all a flame and a song and a longing almost too great to be borne, and in that way she had never loved Joak.

March came with gales, and daffodils in London

windows-houses and at street-corners, and both swelling in the tall trees in the parks. In April they returned to the country, where the primroses were as thick as stars in the hedgerows, and post-trees in orchards and cottage gardens were snow-white with blossoms. Blake thought of daffodils under stone walls in the West of Ireland, and yellow lilies among the reeds beside the lake, and the green growth at the base of the dead wood of the Scotch hedges, and the English smother of blossom meant nothing to her.

She still heard Liam's voice everywhere, waking and sleeping, but it no longer whispered her name.

"Come down," it intoned. "Come down. Come down!"

She rode, revolved visitors, walked in the grounds, played with her little daughter, and waited for Josie's week-end visits. Sometimes he brought friends with him from town; sometimes they were alone. He was always charming, attractive, generous, lover-like; and endlessly patient. She responded as best she could, because he was dear to her, and she wanted not to hurt him. But she had a sense, always, of waiting, listening.

Then what she wanted for—without knowing that it was this—happened. Liam came walking up the drive, in riding-clothes as always, hatless, the blue rambling turning his hair to gold. He strolled, leisurely, smiling, confident, and reeling a pair of goggles. As in a dream she walked down to meet him. He was hardly more real to her than in all the weeks and months of her waking and sleeping visions of him.

"There," she whispered, and touched his hands. He drew her to him, holding her close, his face against hers, and it was as though they had no need to him, or her.

was the joy of merely touching and seeing; of merely being together. As though it was for this they had been born. As though they could never again be separated.

"Come," he said at last, softly.

"Where?"

"Away from here."

They walked back down the drive together, their arms still about each other, her head against his shoulder. All thought had gone from her. It was as though she no longer had material substance.

They walked out through the gate, and still in her arms she asked him, dreamily, "Where are we going?"

He said again, "Away from here."

They walked for some time in silence between the spring hedgerows, and presently he asked, "You expected me?"

"I felt you would come," she told him. "I didn't know when. I seemed to be waiting."

He made no comment, and they walked on until they came to a green field, and there she saw the "plane," like a white veer resting on the land.

"We will climb up into the clouds together," he said, softly. "Up into the blue—alone and free——"

He pulled at her, and she answered his smile. They entered the stretch of sliding grass together, hand in hand. She had a sense of floating, and of helplessness before it, and her mind slept in an endless dream.

She climbed into the cockpit of the "plane" beside him, and was aware of his hand upon the joystick. The propeller rotated and rotated and the machine tilted. She hardly knew when the wheels left the earth and they began to climb.

end

He looked at her and smiled. She smiled and moved closer to him, her head against his shoulder, her mind asleep.

They climbed up into a bank of cloud and were no longer visible from the earth.

They were never seen again. The 'plane was never reported anywhere, nor any wreckage ever found.

DESTINY

Based on

The Pursuit of Diamond and Gold

BEST-TEXT

I. THE QUEEN

WHEN HIS first wife had been dead a year, God rest her, Sian O'Mann made no secret of the fact that he was looking for her successor, having no liking for the unaccustomed hearth and the lonely bed, and none thinking the worse of him for that, for what more natural—he the first handsome man as near as forty, with a fine big estate in the plains of Meath, stocked with dairy herds and fat cattle, and a castle in the middle of it, he with the great wealth in him and no holes—God love him, why couldn't he be looking for a second wife, and young at that? True, saying nothing against himself, hadn't he married the first one only for her money—and what harm? Wasn't she very lucky to be able to buy herself so handsome a husband, she with nothing to recommend her but her money, the creature, being on the wrong side of forty, and her face no help to her? Ten years older than Edward Fole'd been, and he'd been the devoted husband to her for nearly as many years; he had been her pride and joy, and her money had given him what he wanted—social position, a fine estate, a good cellar, polished harness in the stable, freedom from debts and mortgages

and financial harassment in general, everything, in fact, except the crowning blessing of a child or two. One at least, he had hoped for, but she was not able for it, poor lady, being, indeed, more or less an invalid. She had loved him and been grateful to him; it was a fair enough bargain, to be sure, since both parties were satisfied, but now that she had departed this life, leaving him well endowed with all worldly goods, it was also, to be sure, in the nature of a happy release for him, and made him the most eligible bachelor in all Ireland—all thirty-two counties of it. With no disrespect for the departed, wasn't he now God's gift of hope for unmarried young females far and wide when the respectable year or so of decent mourning would be up?

Modern rich eligible daughters invited the rich and handsome and charming widower to all manner of social occasions—house-parties, dinner-parties, house-parties, dances, but John who had so bravely married for money the first time seemed now determined to marry for love alone, and was hard to please. He turned his charming candid smile on all the young women—and some not so young—presented to him, but the charming smile concealed a critical disachment; he was in no hurry; this time it was he who was doing the buying, and the buyer can afford to take time and be as choosy as maybe. He looked the marriage-market over as carefully as the cattle-market on fair-days. As always there were more sellers than buyers.

After a full season of parties and receptions and balls in Dublin and the country he came to the conclusion that the wife he was looking for was not to be found among 'the quality', and decided to widen the field of his search.

In the jaded dog-days of August he would become a tourist among the tourists, and what he had not found in County Meath and County Dublin he might perhaps find in County Mayo or County Donegal in the far West. He did not mind whether the object of his search was dark or fair, or red-haired, short or tall, plump or slim, a town girl or a country girl, in her teens or in her twenties, whether her father had three acres or thirty or more, but two qualities were essential—the must be easy on the eye, and good-natured; if possible he would like it if she should also be intelligent and good company, but he did not insist on this.

So he got into his long low elegant car, with a quantity of elegant pigskin baggage in the back, and he drove across the flat middle of Ireland and came to the brown hills and blue mountains and shimmering lakes of the West. Wherever he went he made no secret of his quest: in little lanes in the narrow streets of Galway town, and leaning against the bar counters of dark little shops in one-crook country places, where every grocer's and every bicycle shop is a pub, or sitting up on stools in smart bars in anglers' haunts in the tourist centers, "I am looking for a nice girl to marry," he would announce, looking round as though he expected to find her blossoming there, behind the bar, or under a potbel pot, like a garden-escape of a flower awaiting his gathering. "She must be beautiful and she must be good," he would add, smiling his charming smile. "If she has good hands for a house and can handle a sailing-boat, so much the better, but beautiful and good she must be. And when I say good I don't mean pious, always running to the church, but generous and loving and kind and decent."

Few of girls looked at him and smiled, the handsomer stranger with the graying hair and catted blue eyes, wondering was he serious or 'maddling', but hoping he was serious, and he smiled back at them and beyond them. Until at last his eyes came to rest on Barbara Mitchell serving porter in the bar of her father's grocery-shop at the very back of beyond, at a little corner of a place called Ballymacross in the wild heart of Connemara.

She was a slim girl, on the tall side, with red-gold hair falling in thick waves about a high-chock-boned oval face. She had, Alan thought, the most beautiful eyes he had ever seen, almond-shaped and grey-green, with great depth; great shadowed peaks of eyes, he thought. Everything about her delighted him, the shape of her head, and the way she carried it, the lift of her small pointed breasts, the quick grace of her young body. There was both sweetness and strength in her face; she would develop into a woman of character, he thought.

He stayed in Ballymacross a month, though the fishing was poor and the reward went heavily, and the best hotel in the place left, from his point of view, everything to be desired—the food was monstrous and badly cooked, the bed hard, the water never more than lukewarm, the service almost non-existent. He went every mid-day and every evening into Paddy Mitchell's, drinking whisky and water and chatting with the girl's father, and with the girl herself.

It pleased him that though he let it be known that he was looking for a wife she did not 'make eyes' at him as so many had done. There was neither guile nor coquetry in her, he thought. She was simple and direct—and spirited, which he liked. She teased him a little.

"When you find the girl you'd like to marry how do you know she'll want to marry you?"

"I hadn't thought of that!"

"Aren't you very conscious now?" she looked at him.

Humbly he said, "I suppose so."

It was true he hadn't thought of the "dream girl", if such when he found her, rejecting him; the force of his own desire, it had seemed to him, should compel her will to submission and kindle the responsive flame in her. His difficulty had never been to attract women; from boyhood he had found that he attracted them all too readily; his problem had always been to keep them at the required distance. That a woman might reject him had, quite simply, never occurred to him; it was hardly conceivable to him, but an article expounded by experience.

But this girl, Barbara Mitchell, although she seemed to like him well enough, always smiling when she spoke to him, gave not the slightest indication of a more personal interest; her manner was always cool and detached. He learned from her father that she had no "boy-friend" and never had had. "There's time enough," her father said, "she's only twenty as yet. When she falls in love it'll be for life—she's not like the general run of young girls these days, in and out of love the way it would make you sleep trying to keep up with them. Barbara's the deep kind."

"Should you object to my asking her to marry me?" Alan inquired.

Fairly Mitchell stared at the strange gentleman lounging on the terrace and watching the first whiff of the day between his fingers. The gentleman was more cold sober—not a doubt of it. Indeed he had never seen Mr.

THE WILD SWANS

O'Mara otherwise. And as far as could be discerned he was in his right mind.

"And why would a gentleman like yourself wish to marry the daughter of a country tradesman?" he demanded, mildly.

"Because a gentleman like myself gets very tired of all the bright smart young ladies of his own world," Sam told him, regarding his glass with a sympathy. "I told you I was looking for a nice girl to marry. Barbara seems to me a very nice girl, and a very attractive one."

"Ah, she's a fine looking girl all right," her father conceded. He added, "There's several in these parts would marry her like a cat if she'd have them, but she'd not marry till she falls in love. If you could persuade her to fall in love with yourself now—put the idea into her head, as you might say——"

Sam smiled. "I can, but try—with your kind permission and co-operation. To begin with you might repeat this conversation to her, and say that I would like her and her mother to come and stay with me for a time at O'Mara Castle so that we can get to know each other—such a view is matrimony, as the advertisements say. You might add that the idea has your blessing."

"Sure," said Paddy, "sure!" and the smile spread on his face as the idea spread in his mind, with a slow comforting warmth, like whisky in the belly on a cold night.

"Aren't you great?" he murmured, happily, "and wouldn't she be very foolish not to accept?"

When they had got over the first shock of the idea, of Barbara marrying Mr. Sam O'Mara, Mr. and Mrs. Michael began to see the possibilities inherent in the idea, and

Mr. O'Mara was very wealthy; he was also, it seemed, very generous; he would not allow his wife's parents to struggle along in Ballymacross—and with his help they could be running a nice little paying business in Glasgow or even Dublin. It was a wonderful opportunity not only for Barbara, but for all of them.

Barbara was considerably agitated by the proposal. She liked Mr. O'Mara and thought him very distinguished-looking. It had even crossed her mind, when he spoke of looking for someone to make his second wife, that it must be fine to fall in love with and marry such a man. He would make, she felt sure, a most romantic and devoted and considerate husband. But one could not fall in love on order, and she did not happen to be attracted by middle-aged distinction. The man she would one day fall in love with would be young and wild and gay; she had her own private romantic dream—and Miss O'Mara, for all his wealth, had nothing to do with that dream.

But the dream, she reflected, troubled, might never be realized, and she might spend the rest of her life dreaming in its purpose, sewing parties behind the curtain in the dark little shop, grubbing along in a threadbare sort of existence such as her parents had known all their lives, and were doomed to know to the end—unless she rescued them from it by doing what everyone would call 'reasonable', burying her romantic dream, and marrying the charming Mr. O'Mara and going to live with him in his castle in the plains of Meath. On the face of it, the considered, the idea was romantic to a degree; many girls would envy her; it just didn't happen to be her conception of romance.

When next Miss came into the bar she did not greet

him with her usual timid smile, but was blushing and confused.

He smiled, in an attempt to set her at ease.

"Your father told you of our conversation?"

"He did—and it isn't possible."

"You don't like me well enough?"

"Ah, now, I like you, don't you know it well? But liking isn't enough to get married on!"

He turned his glass in his fingers and looked into it, thoughtfully.

"Would you say I was reasonable if I suggested you might get to love me—if you gave yourself a chance? Don't bring a good head for thinking on!"

"I don't know," she said, helplessly. "I just don't know. I've never been in love."

"At least you and your mother can come and stay with me," he urged. "It would make a change for you both, and if no good comes of it neither will any harm. You might," he added, smiling, "even like it!"

Her mother was full of enthusiasm for the idea.

"Wouldn't it be a fine thing to be staying in a real castle?" she demanded eagerly. "And even if nothing comes of it, now, what harm?"

"Your mother hasn't had a holiday since we were married," her father urged.

The moral pressure seemed to her to be overwhelming.

"Sure, if your heart's set on it," she told her mother, "we'll go, but however will I be falling in love with a man old enough to be my father?"

"Sure there's plenty have managed it," her mother assured her, complacently.

"Everyone would say I'd married him for his money!"

"What harm? Wouldn't they all be very jealous all the same?"

Barbara merely sighed, troubled.

Mrs. Mitchell was charmed with O'Mara Carlo. To think that she might one day, if Barbara was sensible, be as it were related to so fine and splendid a place, gave her an excited pleasure. What more could any girl wish for than to charming a husband as John O'Mara and to reside in a home as O'Mara Castle? Barbara, it seemed to her, did not realize her immense good fortune. Mrs. Mitchell was impatient with her daughter. John obviously adored her. What more did she want? It was all very well to marry the romantic hero; everyone knew romance didn't last, and when it was all over where were you? You would have done better to have been sensible in the first place, when you had the chance. People said chance was a fine thing, and so it was, and Barbara was one of the lucky ones who had the chance to secure a fine life for herself—and to mention putting herself in the position to help her parents.

Barbara was not entranced by the castle as her mother was; its towers and battlements, its huge rooms, its labyrinth of passages, flanked by high windows, appeared here; it seemed to her fantastic that such a place could be anyone's home, and she could not seriously enter into her mother's dream of herself as mistress of it.

John was an attractive and charming host, and despite her reluctance to the idea of marrying him Barbara found herself liking him increasingly, to the point of a genuine affection. She recognized that he was in the best sense a good person—kind, generous, considerate, not merely

within his own circle, but to servants and strangers, and any stranger who crossed his path. He was also good company, easy-going, good-natured, humorous. The spell of his charm worked on Barbara, insensibly, so that the outline of her dream blurred and she no longer felt that she knew the difference between loving and being in love. Perhaps she would never love any man, outside of dreams, more than she loved him! Perhaps in reality there was no more to human love than this—the rest so much romantic fiction! She didn't want O'Mara Castle, or any of the material things that marriage with him offered, but she did want peace of mind—which seemed increasingly bound up with her ability to make him happy by becoming his wife.

When she finally agreed to be engaged to him she did so with a feeling of exaltation. She was overwhelmed by congratulations on all sides; her mother and Sam were radiant with happiness. A dance was given to announce the engagement. Dreams were sent out from Dublin in approval for herself and her mother. Flowers were raised in the house, seatings were put out, red carpets laid.

Barbara watched all the preparations almost in a state of trance. She had a curious feeling that all that was being arranged for her had in fact nothing to do with her. She felt this before she set eyes on Oscar Clancy playing tennis. After that nothing that had to do with her belonged to Mrs O'Mara, had reality; her very presence in O'Mara Castle only had reality then in relation to young Clancy.

Clancy and his father, Thomas Mahony, had arrived a week before the dance, and would be staying

on for a time, Stan said, and went on to explain that Torrance was one of his oldest friends; he lived in Paris, where he had a leather-goods business; whenever he came to Ireland he spent a few weeks at O'Mara Castle. He and his wife had adopted Conor when he was a child, being themselves childless. Mrs. Mahony had been dead for some years now. Conor's parentage, said Stan, was known only to the priest who had arranged the adoption; the Mahonys were the only parents he had ever known. He was a nice young man, Barbara would find, and equally good on a beach-mat, a horse, or in a ballroom. He told her all this while they sat watching the tennis. Barbara hardly heard what Stan said. There seemed nothing in the world but Conor Clancy's tall, slender figure darting and leaping in the sunshine.

II. THE FIGHT

THUS BEGAN one of those strange wild loves that sometimes seize human beings, from which there is no escape, and beyond all reasoning. There was every reason why Barbara should love Stan, who already loved her, and no real reason why she should love young Clancy, who liked her well enough, and thought her attractive, but who did not think of her in romantic terms—because the fact that she was engaged to marry someone called that, for him, all possibility of thinking of her in such terms. He had a great admiration for Stan, and considered that any girl who was lucky to be his wife was extremely fortunate, so that when he casually liked Barbara as, her betrothal he was completely sincere. His English criticism wounded her. She wanted to demand of him, himself, was it or was it not a thing for a young girl to be going to marry a man old enough to be her father, a widower at that, knowing that she was not in love with him? Was it everything in a man to be wealthy and distinguished? Didn't youth count for anything? And didn't each one's youth and romantic dream count?

Now, she thought, I am trapped. I am committed to marrying a man I do not love, and because of it the man I am in love with will not permit himself to look at me

except in posing! I am the Goddess when she first set eyes on Diamond playing games and knew that she would never love anyone else all her life. Ah, but Goddess had fire and spirit and fought for what she wanted. Goddess refused to marry the man she did not love. Goddess was wise. . . She made Diamond take her away. He did not want to, but she made him. She made him. . .

While she was dreading for the dance Barbara told her mother, "I can't go through with this! I can't marry a man I'm not in love with! The engagement mustn't be announced. We must go away in the morning."

Her mother was completely horrified.

"You must be mad! You've known for a month now that Alan wanted to marry you. You've had time to think it over, and you've now given your word. You can't possibly get out of it now! I don't know why you wish to, I'm sure. There'll be many a girl here tonight will wish she'd the luck to be in your shoes!"

"We should never have come here!" Barbara declared, passionately. "I never wanted to marry Alan!"

"What have you against him, for God's sake?" her mother demanded, bewildered.

"I've nothing against him—except that he's old enough to know better than to try to persuade a girl young enough to be his daughter to marry him, knowing that she's not in love with him! Supposing I go on with it—what sort of marriage is it likely to turn out?"

"As good as none, likely," her mother said, impatiently.

When her mother had gone off to her own room to dress Barbara stood at the window looking out over the park. Everything in her life had, in a momentary hysteria,

that she could not go through with the dance and the announcement of her engagement to Sam. Whatever anyone might say or do or think she could not do it. Her whole impulse was to run away—impetuous, come what may, only to get away from this place where there was the feeling of captivity closing in on her. Richard stormed and raged in her. For the first time she understood the stories which appeared in the newspapers from time to time of brides or bridegrooms who ran away on the very day they were to be married; hitherto she had never understood why they left it till then; now she knew that they had driven themselves on to the point at which reflection of all that was involved became too much for them—the actual moment of commitment. One could not so readily resist against all instinct, against all that was strongest and deepest in oneself. Thus she could not go and no farther. Utterly no farther.

I must run away, she thought, desperately; what happens once I've left here doesn't matter; but I must get out of here, before it's too late; before people begin arriving; before mother in all her hurry never leaves my side. I must go now, she thought, whilst people are drinking, whilst no one is about. I must hide away somewhere where no one knows me. Perhaps I could get a job in Dublin and save enough to get right away to England. Only I must go now—quickly—at once . . .

She began tearing off the beautiful evening dress. She left it in a heap on the floor and reached the second suit in which she had arrived at the back out of the wardrobe and began scrambling into the skirt, which was blown from a hanger, kicked off the high-heeled evening shoes and thrust her feet back into heavy walking shoes. She

threw a few things into a small suitcase, grabbed her handbag, then opened the door of her room and peeped out. There was no one in sight in the long wide corridor. She ran along it, checking the saloon. It seemed inaccessible, with its long windows, the curtains moving lightly in the evening breeze. It was the sudden perspective of a dream, with the curtains flying out to catch her and pull her back to the porch.

Then there was the wilderness of the wide staircase flanked with statues that watched her flight with their hollow eyes. Run, run, run, compelling in her delirium. Down the great staircase, across the great open spaces of the polished floor, and through the marble pillared porch, across the terrace, down the broad steps and on to the ramp of grated pavement which led the long drive—the long shadowy drive with the tall trees and the dark walls of wild rhododendrons, and beyond it the great flat world outside the castle walls. Past the bridge—were there open pastures from every window of that fairy-tale like house—out through the great wrought-iron gate and on to the dusty white road. Don't look back! Run, run, run! . . .

The pursuing car was almost on her before she reached its machine, then she crouched to the side of the road, trembling from the shock of the realization of how nearly she had been run over. She was conscious from the noise of the jammed-on brakes and by the movement of the car. Then a voice exclaimed, "Raphana, for God's sake!" and she realized that Uncle Quincy was leaning towards her from the open window.

"Hurry on, cars are just racing off too!" he demanded.

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"I'm running away," she said, breathlessly, then leaning against the door of the car began to cry.

"Help me," she beseeched. "You must help me! I can't go through with tonight—the dance—the announcement. I can't be engaged to Edna! I can't go back!"

"For God's sake!" Carter said again.

"Drive me somewhere," she wept. "Anywhere out of here—make them leave!"

"You can't do this," he said. "Your mother and Edna will be desperate!"

She raised her head, then said her eyes blazed at him.

"I'm desperate! Can't you see? I'm running for my life—don't you see? Haven't I the right to live my life in my own way?"

"That you have, but there's no need to run away like this. No one can make you marry Edna if you don't want to. You've only to go back and tell him quickly you've changed your mind and the engagement can't be announced."

"Oh, but you don't understand!" she cried, wildly. "If I go back they'll work on me, mother and Edna and everyone—they'll get round me. They'll crowd in on me till I suffocate and can't fight them any more! I've got to get away. Take me away! Please take me away!"

She was sobbing hysterically again.

He opened the door of the car at the other side.

"You'd better get in," he said.

She walked round the front of the car and got in beside him. He drove further in to the side of the road. He regarded her for a moment, half smiling, then said, "Now supposing I just drove you back to the castle?"

"I'd throw myself out! I won't go back there, I tell
all

SAM TINY

you—I won't! If you won't take me anywhere I'll go somewhere alone."

"Where will you go?"

"I don't know. I could probably get a lift into Dublin. In a city one can hide oneself. I could get work there—in a shop, a bar, anywhere."

He tried to reason with her, but it was completely useless. She alternately wept and stormed, and finally declared herself in love with himself.

He was extremely perturbed and distressed, and with all his heart he wished he had not encountered her in her flight. Now, it seemed to him, he was being forced into being a party to it. It was beginning to grow dark. John and Terence and Mrs. Mitchell would be going down to dinner, wondering where Barbara and Conor were. Perhaps they already realized that Barbara had run away—and they would think she had run away with him. Barbara had no right to implicate him in this way. He should just dump her in the road and then race back to the castle and make some excuse for his lateness, leaving Barbara to come to her senses on her own.

"Listen, Barbara," he pleaded, and wondered how many times he had said just that already.

"Listen, Barbara!" But there was nothing left to say. She was determined not to return. She would throw herself out of the window of the car rather than be driven back. Her mind utterly rejected any idea but that of getting as many miles as possible between herself and Fitzmaurice Castle, and her mother's and John's society were nothing beside the intensity—the intensity, almost, it seemed to him—of that obsession.

Finally he turned the car in the direction of Dublin.

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Barbara sat silently by his side. She was quite calm now, and her expression, he was aware, was very determined.

It was dark and late when they arrived. He drove to a small quiet hotel where he had stayed with Truman, and then announced that he intended telephoning his father-in-law.

He said, briefly, "You may not mind worrying your mother and Miss, but I refuse to have Truman worried."

"If you tell him where we are they'll come rushing out after us. I'll go."

"There's no need to. He'll not say a word if I tell him not to. He might even help us—that is to say you. I'm going back in the morning."

She asked him, no less briefly, "Why don't you go back tonight?"

He told her, shortly, "I'm too tired—both for the drive back and all the fuss and explanation when I get there. I've not your taste for melodrama!"

He went off angrily to telephone.

To George's surprise Truman was amused by the situation; it was not uncommon for young people to run off together, he said, or for young men to run off with young women; but for a young woman to run off with a young man, and him unwilling—that struck him as delightfully fresh, and he admitted, he said, the young woman's spirit and enterprise. It was bad luck on poor old Miss, of course, but middle-aged men who tried to tie down young girls were asking for trouble. He would report that the young woman was safe, and he would not betray her whereabouts.

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"Perhaps I should take her back to Paris with me," he suggested helpfully.

"You can do what you like with her!" Gower told him, carelessly. "I've done all I intend to do for her."

He heard his sister-father chuckle.

"You modern young have no sense of romance—or gallantry! All right. I'll come out in the morning around noon. Sleep well—Diamond!"

"What was that crack?" Gower demanded.

But Thomas had already rung off.

III. THE PRISON

ON HIS father's father's advice Goner did not return to O'Brien Castle in the morning. Nothing, it seemed, would convince Brian that Goner had not run off with Barbara.

"But if I go back——" Goner protested.

"He'll only think it's an attempt to hoodwink him. He'll be convinced you've got her hidden away somewhere. He's also convinced that I am in the plot. *Ad!*"—he smiled, pleasantly—"it seems I *was* am I?"

"You don't have to be," Goner pointed out. "We can perfectly well leave Barbara to her own devices and go back to Park together. But if you're taking her I'm not coming. I'll stay on here in Dublin—there's plenty to do. I refuse to be mixed up in all this."

"My dear Goner, if you didn't want to be mixed up in it you should have left her in the road yesterday morning and gone back to the Castle."

"How could I have left her?"

"If you couldn't leave her then to find her herself then I don't see how we can leave her now—when the most difficult part of her adventure begins! Besides," his eyes flickered with amusement, "the story has to run its destined course, and it was *Angus* who took care of

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Grilstone for a time. Angus, if you remember, was Diamond's foster-father."

"Fantasy's not in my line!" Conce snapped.

Trevor smiled.

"History has a way of repeating itself, why not legend? Particularly when the two overlap as much as they do in our country."

"I don't see myself playing Diamond to Barbara's Grilstone, that's all!"

Trevor smiled and made no comment. Barbara, he was quite sure, enjoyed playing Grilstone to Conce's Diamond, and for himself he was quite happy in the amiable role of Angus. It was just too bad that poor old Elin had been cast for the role of the wronged fiancé . . . though it remained to be seen how far the story developed parallel with the ancient legend.

Barbara liked Trevor; she liked his dry sense of humour and his easy acceptance of any and every situation. He was not handsome like Elin, but had his own quality of distinction, with his tall thin figure, and amused blue eyes lighting a lean handsome face. And the fact that he was unobtrusively fond of her without being in love with her made it easy for her own natural warmth to find expression. She felt completely at ease with him and his suggestion that she should return with him to Paris till, as he put it, the storm blew over, seemed to her an admirable solution to her problem.

She was hurt by Conce declining to come to Paris with them—he hardly disguised the fact that his refusal had everything to do with her—but her relief at being safely away from Old Mrs. Gask, and out of her economic quest to Elin, was so intense that her disappointment

was to a large extent well-served up in this. Terence said, "Oh, don't mind him! He can't say very clever!"

"But how can I say here *here*?"

He gave her his quizzical smile.

"Why not? But why not live one day at a time and see what happens?"

Paris enthralled her. The charms of the *Champs-Élysées* were changing colour, and the poplars leaning out over the Seine were already golden. She loved everything about Paris—the gorgeous shabby old houses of the *Bois de Louis*, the flower and bird markets beside *Notre Dame*, the Luxembourg Gardens with its masses of clipped chestnut trees, and from the fountain at the far end of it the view of the *Sacré Coeur* gleaming white and Eastern on its hill far away across the city. She liked the crowds and calls of the main boulevards, the dress and perfume and flower shops, the students' calls of the *Bois Bléchi*, the amusing affections of the Latin Quarter and Montparnasse, the steep cobbled streets of Montmartre, the woods above the river at St. Cloud—the whole mélange that is forever Paris.

Terence took her shopping in the *Champs-Élysées*, and riding in the *Bois*; he took her to Versailles when the fountains were playing, and to Fontainebleau when the lawns were golden. In his charming apartment on the right bank she had a room which looked across chestnut trees and the river to the Eiffel Tower and the golden dome of Les Invalides. Paris, she thought, had a life of its own. Her son of its own gay popular songs. If only Camie had been there all would have been perfect. But Camie wrote to his father on business matters, and occasionally

telephoned him from Dublin, but he did not come to Paris, and he sent no messages to Barbara.

Cousin did not come to Paris, but Stan did. Barbara was sitting with Trevor outside a café on the Champs-Élysées when they suddenly saw Stan strolling along, his gaze intently searching the corners of every café. They immediately got up and went inside the café until he had passed. Barbara was white and shivery.

"How did he know I was here?"

"Guessed it, I imagine. It's an easy guess."

"What am I to do? I don't feel safe here any more."

"We'll take a trip down to the south for a few weeks—I generally do go about now."

They went to Monte Carlo, where Trevor had a villa, and on the first morning saw Stan strolling along the promenade. Trevor gasped.

"He probably telephoned my apartment in Paris and the servant told him I'd gone south—with the young lady?"

"Supposing he calls at the villa?"

"You will have gone by the night-train back to Paris."

"It's terrible—this feeling of being pursued from place to place."

Trevor shrugged.

"It's part of the pattern, I'm afraid."

"What do you mean?"

"First the flight, then the pursuit——"

She laughed, a little uncertainly. She was often unsure whether to take him seriously or not.

"Aren't you the great one for talking in riddles?" she demanded, a little impatient, but also a little intrigued. If

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this were really the Collins and Diamond story repeating itself in her life and Sean's and Conor's! But that, of course, was nonsense; there had been the single possible incident of her flight with Conor, but as to Sean pursuing her—they could not even be sure that he had; it was not unusual for him to go to Paris occasionally and run down to the Riviera for a few weeks, away from the damp Irish autumn.

But the day they drove along the Corniche to Nice to lunch at Terence's favourite restaurant and, just in time, saw Sean seated at a table in the window, Terence's faithful acceptance of the situation received a jolt; it was enough, he declared, to give one a penetration maul; it could get on one's nerves. They laughed disbelieving and, discussing the matter, decided to go back to Paris that night, but it would be better, Terence thought, if Barbara did not return to the apartment—in case Sean should return; she would feel safer tucked away in a small obscure hotel on the other side of the river. Or perhaps she should now return to Ireland and live and work in Dublin as she had originally planned? But she was thrown into a panic by the suggestion; now that the hunt was on, Sean would surely find her there.

Terence pointed out that even if Sean did find her he couldn't compel her to marry him.

"Ah, but he could!" she cried, wildly. "He would get round me—he and my mother together, the pair of them! I couldn't bear it! Oh, please let me stay here a while longer yet. There are some Irish nuns here will find me something to do——"

She was so obviously distressed that Terence felt that so long as her phobia concerning Sean's power over her

liked the war better when she was. She was probably right that if she went back Stan and her parents would ruin their pleasure and wear her down as before. Stan, it seemed evident, was obsessed by the idea of marrying her. Perhaps he really saw himself in the role of the jilted fiancé.

Then, suddenly, Conor arrived in Paris, bringing with him the news that Stan had married a young woman from rusty Wicklow. He brought with him various Dublin newspapers and magazines containing photographs of the wedding.

"So now you can go home," Conor said, smiling. "Isn't that happy for you?" She was aware of the edge of mockery in his voice.

There was an edge to her own voice as she retorted, "Perhaps I prefer Paris?"

But when she had said that it was as though she had looked out at him with an invisible whip when all her instinct was to put her arms round him, holding him close to her heart, then leap with a wild joy merely to see him standing there in the dark little entrance hall of her hotel, with Thomas behind him, and she could not bear it, and her eyes filled with tears.

"I so hoped for you to come here," she added. "I had a feeling you would come, eventually."

"I had to come on business!" His tone was defiant.

Thomas smiled.

"The young man is not gallant," he observed. "But he is of his generation, and he is here. We'll see what a good dinner will do for us all! Let's go."

They dined in Thomas's favourite Left Bank restaurant, at the corner of the Boulevard Malesherbes where it runs

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out to the Seine, and so what Terence did not know about wine and food was not worth knowing, they dined extremely well.

Conce relaxed from the defensive mood in which he had first greeted Barbara, and talked easily and unreservedly of Ireland. They all laughed a great deal, and it came to Conce all over again that Barbara was a very attractive girl; it also came to him that now there was no reason why he should not allow himself to be attracted, since not merely was she not engaged to marry anyone else, but the man she had been engaged to for so short a time was now safely married himself. Conce would not admit, even to himself, that this had something to do with his decision to come to Paris to discuss various business matters with his father in person, rather than by letter and telephone as hitherto.

When they left the restaurant he drew Barbara's arm through his. He felt excited and happy. The lights of Paris had never seemed to him so beautiful, or life so beautiful an adventure. It was too fine a night to turn in, he declared, and proposed they should take a stroll along the river. Terence said that strolls along draughty informal quays were for the young and warm-blooded; for his part he proposed to take the first taxi that came along and head for his apartment, central heating, and bed. . . .

He halted a taxi within the next few yards, and when they were alone Conce drew Barbara closer to his side, and a few yards farther on, in the narrow shadowy alleyway off the *Grande Rue du Chat-qui-Pêche*—the Street of the Fishing Cat—he took her into his arms.

IV. THE KINSHIP

WHEN MRS. MITCHELL saw her daughter's engagement in *Mr. Canon Clancy announced*, with photographs, in the leading newspapers, she felt reminded to the loss of O'Mara Circle in the family. Mr. Terence Mahony proved himself every whit as much a gentleman as Mr. John O'Mara by paying for her to stay in a grand Dublin hotel with her daughter for a few weeks before the wedding to assist with the purchase of a trousseau—for which, also, he was paying.

After the capital Miss Mr. Mahony provided champagne at the hotel at which Barbara and her mother had been staying, before the young couple left for Collinstown with him to fly to Paris, from whence they were to travel to the French Riviera for their honeymoon. They would return to set up house in Dublin, where Canon would manage the Dublin end of the Mahony business.

All this went according to plan, and the years succeeded each other tranquilly for Barbara and Canon, with summer visits to Ballynacorney, and occasional visits at all seasons to Paris, and the blessing of three sons and a daughter. When the greater part of the rest of the world was being strangled by the most savage war in history Ireland remained in calm of peace and order. France

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was cut off for a time, which meant for Barbara and Connor being cut off from Terence and one of their sons who had joined him in the business there. One son went to America, and another married and went to live in Cork, but their daughter Míra remained with them, giving no indication, at the age of twenty, of any desire to get married. But even that was clear enough for that, said Barbara, and wasn't I the same at that age?

As forty-five Barbara still looked young enough to be taken for her daughter's sister rather than her mother, and was if anything more beautiful than she had been as a young girl, having acquired a poise which the girl who had served prison in Michael's bar in Dalhousieroad had lacked. Twenty-five years had not diminished her wild love for Connor; still when she looked at him she saw him as she had seen him on the tennis court at O'Mara Castle, with the feeling that only him could she ever love, and him she would love until she died. With this love was a little less bright, and his slim figure a little less like, she was not aware of it. He was both more beautiful and more dear to her than any of her sons, though she loved them devotedly, and they were accounted handsome young men. Connor was more than her husband and the father of her children; he was her darling and her love, the bright treasure of her heart, 'the evening star and her star at evening', as it is written in the ancient Irish.

When she did not see him in all that time, though sometimes in a paper or magazine she would see a poor photograph of him and his wife at a race-meeting or a hunt ball or a cattle show. He had only one child of his marriage, a son the same age as Míra. Terence had
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written to him at the close of his marriage in an attempt at reconciliation, but he had not replied. When several more letters went unanswered it could only be concluded that he did not wish for a renewal of the friendship. Every Christmas he sent a card to the Michells at Ballymacross, but he did not go again to the West. From people who knew him and visited at O'Mara's Castle Barbara heard that he was as devoted a husband to his second wife as to his first; whether he had found in his second marriage what he sought she had no means of knowing. It was said by some that whereas he had married his first wife for her money he had married the second out of pity—but that, Barbara thought, could be the meanest Dublin gossip.

When Connor brought her the news of the second Mrs. O'Mara's death in hospital, where she collapsed after a major operation, they discussed whether they should write a letter of sympathy to Miss Barbara, maintained that as he had not replied to any of Treason's letters he would not welcome a letter of condolence from them. Connor urged that people sometimes welcomed in sorrow and loneliness what they rejected when they were happy and filled in their lives.

"Wouldn't it be a fine thing," Connor urged, "if we could all be friends again? He was after all Treason's greatest friend, and who would wish to go down to the grave with a grudge? Twenty-five years is a long time. Wouldn't it," he added, "be a fine thing if Miss and Sean's son could be friends—perhaps even fall in love with each other?"

He was half-joking, but the idea struck a spark in Barbara's romantic fantasy imagination. If Miss should

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But to have with the Swan O'Mara of this generation it would be the perfect romance standing off at the elbow. . . .

She told herself that she was being very sentimental and romantic, but nevertheless the idea persisted with her, and she could not deceive herself that when she agreed with Clive that they should write to Brian her real concern was with his loneliness. It was a difficult letter to write, she found. Finally she wrote very simply and briefly:

A dear Dad, Clive and I feel deeply for you in your great loneliness. If our sympathy and friendship help please accept them, and now that you are coming to us Dublin perhaps you would let us know and come and stay with us. What has happened to us all in all these many years and it should now be possible for us all to be friends. Laough gheille agus bannacht. Barbara.

P.D.—Please bring your son if he would care to come. We should like to meet him.

Would he reach this venture, she wondered, as he had reached Trevelin? If so there was nothing to be done. If not, who knew what might develop? Perhaps Brian was after all to prove part of the pattern of her life—through his son and her daughter? The idea obsessed her—and excited her.

Her attention drew her to searching for books of ancient Irish legends and searching for versions of the Grail and Diamond story. She was startled to find in one version that Grail was had speculated on the
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possibility of marrying her only daughter off to a son of Finn, but she could find no record as to whether or not this was achieved. All versions of the story assumed that there was reconciliation between Finn and Diarmuid; that she found acceptable, but that Diarmuid after hearing Finn's boasts of being in the night should go out hunting next day and through the treachery of Finn be killed by the wild boar, and Finn finally succeed in winning Gráinne for himself—all this the found proposition. But then it was, after all, only ancient legend, and it would be the dearest sanctification—if not downright supervision—to identify herself and Conor and Séan with those legendary Celtic characters of the third century. There were certain points of similarity, no lie were, if one were looking for parallels—that she had made Conor run away with her against his will when she was the devoted bride of Séan, and Séan's following of her and Terence to Park and the South—was Terence to be identified with Angus, the foster-father of Diarmuid? It was an odd coincidence, of course, that Conor had a foster-father. . . . But Finn's pursuit of the run-away girl had lasted for more than thirty years, before he married again. That second marriage would be regarded as another parallel, of course, but Finn made yet a third marriage when he finally married Gráinne, and it was unthinkable that she should ever marry Séan; unthinkable and fantastic. Because it was unthinkable that she should manage to sustain life in a world which no longer held Conor, who was part of herself.

But in spite of her attempts to dismiss the idea of her life running parallel with the legend, it remained with her, her mind continually coming back to it. After the

John had gone off to Spain the second himself scuffling the days in Paris with Terence and his talk of a 'pattern' which had to be worked out—as though it were all predestined, the gradual revelation of the will of God. It was the will of God that the pattern of the ancient legend should be repeated in the twentieth century in her life and Connor's and Sean's, then God's will would be done. But how strangely the pattern of one life could overlap and alter another's! If Sean O'Mara had never gone to the West looking for 'a nice girl to marry', never come to Rollymanston and walked into Mitchell's Bar—how different would have been the story of Barbara Mitchell. Or if, when this had happened, when she and her mother had gone to stay at O'Mara Castle if Terence and Connor had not been married. If she had never met Connor she might have gone through with her promise to marry John—how different then the pattern! But God had willed otherwise.

Now it could be that a new story was being introduced into the pattern—if John came back into her life and Connor's. She watched the posts eagerly for a letter from him.

John replied promptly—that he was in no mood to come into the city, but in a few months' time, when all the upsurge of Kary's death and funeral was over, he would be glad if she and Connor, and any other member of her family she cared to bring, would come and stay a few days or a few weeks, as they felt inclined, at O'Mara Castle. He would write again later on.

He fulfilled his promise in November. By that time Maria had gone to Paris to work with Terence, and Sean's son had gone to England, so that, evidently,

Barbara reflected, the new moon in the pattern was not going to be affected through the new generation. But why assume any new moon was to be introduced through the reconciliation with Brian? Her life and Canon's would follow the same lines; Brian's life might be only a little less lonely.

So her mind reasoned; but her heart nevertheless quickened with a nervous excitement at the thought of seeing after twenty-five years the man from whom she had so precipitately fled on the night of the dance. Now she could think, and was prepared to admit to him—I believed badly. But now, no doubt, she told herself, he would concede that her youth excused her. And that Canon, who had never wanted to take her away, was never culpable.

On the drive out from Dublin her nervousness increased with every mile. When they finally reached the massive wrought-iron gates of O'Mara Castle she leaped for the woman who came out from the lodge to open the gates to say that Mr. O'Mara was called away from home; but she opened the gates willingly, with the assurance that 'the master' was expecting them, and they went on up the drive flanked by candelabras which with the years had become high dark walls. Now that she was back it seemed to Barbara, almost that twenty-five years had elapsed since she had fled down that drive on a summer evening, unable to face the announcement of her engagement to Brian O'Mara—and by the grace of God had met her destiny in the shape of Canon Clancy driving back, as though to meet her, through the white dust of the road beyond the castle walls. Now, it came to her, she was older than Brian

had been then, when he had seemed so old to her; it seemed strange, now, that anyone should think of forty as old. How impatient and impatient people were—and how relentless! Now she could see the castle as her mother had seen it—as a beautiful and romantic place, with its towers and battlements, its multicolored windows, its grey stone mellowed with the winds and rains of centuries.

When she stepped out of the car before the terrace she was aware of the deep-country stillness, which the circling of the roads in the tall old dunes along the drive emphasized rather than disturbed.

Then, confusedly, she realized that a tall lean figure had stepped out of a French window and was coming along the terrace to meet them as they descended the steps.

Sam at sixty-five looked ten years younger. His hair was now completely grey, but as thick as ever, and his eyes were as brightly blue, and his figure as erect. If anything he looked even more distinguished now than at forty. He still had immense personal charm, though he smiled less readily than Barbara remembered, and the smile did not always reach his eyes.

He told Barbara, smiling, as he took her hand, "You are more beautiful than ever!"

She blushed, and to cover her confusion asked him, "When did you like the Blarney Stone?"

He laughed.

"I never knew. I'm just naturally crafty!" He turned to Gower. "How are you, at all? Still riding to hounds? It's about all there is to do here in the winter."

Barbara said quickly, "Gower doesn't hunt any more—I don't like him to."

"Barbara's not a horsewoman," Conner explained. "So we try to find things we can do together. She likes riding. We belong to a polo club."

"You afraid we're landlocked here," Stan said, dryly. He stayed at Conner. "You don't mean you've given up riding?" His tone was severe.

"Just the occasional point-to-point," Conner told him.

"Well, I hope you'll enjoy some good hunting while here. I've some good hunters——"

In due course they visited the stables and Stan discussed the points of each horse. His language was a pleasant mix of class and, he said, with beautiful action. In the loose-box next to him was a grey Arab stallion with an intelligent beautiful head, but he held his ears back when approached and the fine prominent eyes regarded the visitors with a nervous hostility.

"He doesn't look too friendly," Conner observed.

Stan laughed, and backed the horse, confidently.

"Fierce back, and the devil in every one of 'em! But he's a grand little nipper and the lightest mouth in the world. There's a treat tomorrow if you'd like to try him—I want to remember you're good hands with a horse."

"No," Barbara said quickly, but neither man appeared to hear her. Conner looked at the horse, fascinated. Excitement worked in him. Horses were in his blood, and he had an idea that there wasn't yet bred the horse he couldn't handle. The spiked little Arab represented a challenge.

"I'd like to try the little beauty," he said, eagerly.

"No," Barbara said again, but Conner only heard

Alan saying, "Once he knows who's master he's manageable. We take a placidish when we go into his den—he likes to get you up against the side if he can, just for the fun of it!"

"The little don?" Goner murmured, and there was a glint in his eyes as he roved regarding the nervously tilted head, the quivering flanks. It would be exciting to measure his will against the stallion's—murmuring, nodding.

When they were alone Barbara said, with what seemed to Goner a curious passion, "I don't want you to go hunting tomorrow!"

He regarded her with a mixture of indignation and bewilderment.

"Why on earth not? When will I ever get such an opportunity again—with a horse like that *little Arab*?"

"It's a vicious beast, you can see that! You're out of practice and will probably be thrown!"

He laughed.

"It wouldn't be the first time!"

"You might break a leg—you might even be killed! People do get killed hunting!"

"Oh, really, Barbara! People get killed riding in trains, or for that matter even walking along a road—they get run over or a tree falls on them or they get struck by lightning!"

"If I don't want you to hunt that should be sufficient reason for not doing it! And I specially don't want you to ride that *beast*!"

"But that's the one horse in the stable I've made keen to ride! Do be reasonable, Barbara! I've handled high-spirited horses before—even downright vicious ones."

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She persisted, stubbornly.

"I'm asking you not to."

He began to be angry.

"And I'm asking you to be sensible!"

"If I told you I had a premonition something was going to happen you'd laugh, I suppose."

"I'm not superstitious, if that's what you mean! If it's God's will I shall die in the hunting-field one day I shall, this time, next year, or sometime!"

She was very pale now.

"Listen, Cousin, to all the everything in the Olden and Diamond story has come true for us—even the ominous allusion. You know what happened to Diamond in the end?"

He laughed. "What does it? He was killed by a wild bear—through the treachery of his ancient enemy. But there are no wild bears in these parts, to the best of my knowledge, nor any other wild beasts——"

"There's that horrible malice!"

"You're not suggesting he's going to die—either for the wild bear and give me to death, are you? Aren't you too fearful all together, you?"

But she refused to be laughed out of it, and remained white and silent for the rest of the evening. Cousin felt irritated. He was determined not to give in to such nonsense. Because he was by nature camp-going, he thought, Barbara had always had her own way, in big things and small alike—even, he reflected, ironically, in making him run off with her and eventually marry her! For now he intended to assert himself. His heart was set on riding that Arab horse tomorrow, and he intended to ride it. All else apart, he would feel no more need telling

Now he had changed his mind about hunting; Selma would think he failed riding the Arab.

When Barbara had gone up to bed Selma commented to Conor on her silence and pallor.

"She was all right when she arrived," he remarked. "Have I done anything to upset her? Or?"—with a gleam of the old shared amusement in his eyes—"have you?"

"She doesn't want me to hunt tomorrow," Conor told him. "She seems to have some fixed idea that I'm going to come to grief with the means you offered me!"

"Extraordinary idea! But ride something else by all means if it'll set her mind at rest! Take your choice."

"I particularly want the Arab!"

"He'll give you a good run, I promise you."

"It's because I'm so sure of it that I want him. It won't hurt Barbara not to have her own way just this once, for the first time in a quarter of a century!"

Selma smiled, but made no comment, and Conor, comforted by the whole business, changed the subject.

When he went up to bed Barbara lay simulating sleep. The fact that she did not stir when he got in beside her made him suspect that she was pretending, but he was only too glad to accept the pretence. He blew out the candle and lay for a while thinking with pleasure of the run tomorrow, and soon fell asleep.

Barbara lay raring at the darkness and her thoughts. She was deeply hurt that Conor so flaxily over-ruled her wishes and was apparently indifferent to her anxiety and distress; she was also quite unable to reason herself out of that anxiety. She felt helpless—and desperate in her helplessness. She could not physically prevent Conor riding to hounds tomorrow, and alone her pleadings

none of us would there was completely nothing she could do—except pray. This she did, fervently, also asking God's forgiveness for her superstitious fears—if such they were. Perhaps, she thought, she was being punished now for her selfishness in running away from John after she had given him her word; perhaps by all this anxiety and dread now she was doing penance for that, and for all the anxiety she had caused her parents all that time she had lived in Paris without letting them have her address. I have been selfish all along she thought, she thought, and now I must suffer.

Part of her wanted to wake Concor and plead with him again not to ride tomorrow, to return home; but another part of her mind knew that it would be useless; she would only anger Concor afresh and still further harden his heart. She could now only trust in God. She closed her eyes, but behind her closed eyelids her mind refused to stay at her thoughts. She heard the thin steady sound of the table clock striking the hours; she told herself each time that she must somehow sleep before it struck again, but when it struck she resigned herself to waiting for it to be light. From time to time an owl called, mournfully, and now and then would come the screech of a nightjar. Then at last, somehow, sleep did come close and drew dark curtains across the white light behind her eyes, and she did not hear the stroke.

It seemed to her she had been asleep only a few minutes when she started up, her heart pounding, her eyes strained in a mood before she even realised she was breathing. She had the nightmare horror of wanting to be able to call out without being able to do so. She wanted to call Concor but the cry seemed imprisoned in her throat.

Then she heard again the sound which had torn her out of sleep, and this time she recognized what it was. It was the sound of a hoarse crying under the window. . . .

She screamed, then, "Daniel! Come!" and flung herself upon him.

When he had sufficiently recovered his senses he groped on the night-table and found the matches and lit the candle in its tall silver holder, in the belief that the light would dispel what he was convinced was Barbara's nightmare, since he himself did not hear any of the barking of which she so hysterically habbled. He poured her out a glass of water but she did not take it from him; she stared past him to the window, her eyes wild and hollow with terror.

"You must hear it," she insisted. "It's quite plain! Listen!"

He listened, then smiled.

"You haven't shaken off the nightmare. There's not a sound. Come on, drink this, there's a good girl."

He held the glass to her lips, and her teeth chattered against it. She drank a little of the water, then closed her eyes and leaned against his shoulder, exhausted.

"Perhaps I was dreaming," she conceded, wearily. "Perhaps it was a nightmare."

"Of course it was." He blew out the candle and pulled her down beside him, keeping an arm round her shoulders.

"You'll be all right now," he said, and gave himself up to sleep again.

Barbara lay watching the windows grow lighter, and finally the dawning day came upon her.

It was a cold sunny morning, crisp and clear—ideal hunting weather, as Stan gloriously observed at breakfast. He and Gomer were as tight and alive as the shining day, Barbara thought, and why should the black shadow of her nightmare reach up to them? She was determined to believe that her night-visions were the stuff of dreams, dissolving in daylight if she willed that they should be, and she did will it. Despite was a sin against the Holy Ghost, and she would not be guilty of it. To Gomer's relief she made no further appeal to him not to hunt, and though she was a little pale and shadowy-eyed from the bad night her manner was normal. When the horses were brought round she joined the party in a stirrup-cup.

Then she stood on the terrace and watched them moving off down the drive, the Arabs dancing a little sideways, but good-humouredly, the groom assured her, and Gomer in perfect control. At the curve of the drive he turned and waved, smiling, and smiling she waved back.

It was her last memory of him—walking in the cold bright November sunshine, straight-backed and inevitably boyish-looking on the high-spirited little grey Arab.

When the winter shadows were long across the fields in the afternoon, and the sun low and crimson in the colourless sky, the stallion with a wild look in its eyes came back ridden on a lead with Stan's man. On Stan's face there was the look of horror which had been on Barbara's in the night. Gomer had been thrown and trampled. He was still alive, though unconscious, in the hospital to which he had been taken, but he died without

regulating consciousness before Barbara—rushed to the hospital in Stan's car—rushed him.

Stan was as stunned by Clancy's death as Barbara was. He had never believed in premonitions, and he did not want to believe in them now. It was the will of God that Clancy Clancy should die in the hunting-field, and Barbara's forebodings had nothing to do with the matter. She was not a humanitarian, and was nervous of horses, and because her husband had not hunted for so long—not, in fact, since his marriage—she had been over-anxious, as women are apt to be, he thought, in matters concerning their men which they do not understand. Had Barbara been a housewife she would not have had such anxiety. It was important to get the matter into perspective. She had this romantic, superstitious notion that her life repeated the pattern of the legendary Odians, but in her heart she must know, he thought, that this was the thickest romanticism. He himself usually rejected the notion; acceptance of God's will was one thing, but that sort of superstitious fatalism, he insisted, quite another.

He tried to reason with Barbara on these lines, but when she mounted on him and accused him of being responsible for Clancy's death by giving him the one vicious horse in his stable, a treacherer as black as Finn's in Diamond's, she insisted, he lost both his temper and his patience with her. The sooner she discussed the whole matter with her father-in-law, he declared, the better. He had tried to help and comfort her, but if she rejected his friendship, there was nothing more he could do. "You can grasp the Clancy's soul," she said, with

James blurted out, "since thanks to you he had no chance to do so the instant *Parthen* his ship came!"

"I shall pray for his soul," Miss told her, no less kindly, "but not from any sense of guilt towards him."

In such bitterness they parted, and they did not see each other again for a year.

Terrace flew over from Paris for the funeral, and Miss made his peace with him, and when next he was in Paris visited him there. Terrace stayed for a time in Dublin, to be near Barbara, only leaving when he realized that he could not break through the armour of bitterness in which she encased herself. As in the early Paris days Terrace accepted the Galileo-Diarmuid-like pattern of Barbara's life, and urged upon her that as she herself did as she must inevitably forgive Miss and be reconciled to him—at the very least. If she did not accept the inevitability of this reconciliation then she must logically reject the whole idea; she could no more accept part of the pattern and discount the rest than accept only a part of Christian doctrine. Either you believed or you didn't, he insisted, with gentle, sympathetic reasonableness.

But Barbara was too bitter and distraught to be reasonable. Her pain was too great. She could not get beyond the idea that Oscar had been taken from her before his time because of treachery on Miss's part. It was useless for Terrace to point out that she had taken the initiative in connecting her life and Oscar's with Miss's, and that there was nothing treacherous in a host inviting a guest to lunch and offering him a spirited horse. Knowing his guest to be an experienced rider. But if she believed in Miss's treachery then she must also believe in ultimate reconciliation with him.

Terrance returned to Paris with a heavy heart. He had loved Barbara as a daughter, as he had loved Goner as a son, but there was nothing more he could do to help her. It seemed to him. His own part in the story was finished years ago, he thought; but the story itself, he was convinced, was not yet finished; he was an old man, now, older than when, but he hoped to be spared to see the end of it.

When was also bitter, but whereas Barbara's was an unquelled bitterness his own was an angry one. What the pain and humiliation she had caused him when she had run out on him enough without the most heaping injustice on him now with false accusations and hardness of heart! His resentment was deep, and all over again, as lively as all that time ago, he regretted the day he had walked into Michael's Bar in Ballynacorney in the far West and first seen Barbara of the flaming hair and felt that his search was ended. Blaming Barbara for the youthful wrong she had done him, and refused her his friendship in her harassment, he felt that he deserved better of her than bitter and unforgotten reproaches.

But neither love nor friendship, it seemed, were for him, and he would do better to accept the fact. There were still good houses to be ridden, good wines to drink; there were still rivers to be fished and hills to be shot; and there was still Paris in the spring—and his old friend Terence himself for good company there.

He had no idea when he went to the West for the fishing some eighteen months after Goner's death that he would find Barbara moving parties in her father's bar. When he walked into the bar and saw her there he

could not believe his eyes—now could she when he walked in. The colour came into her cheeks, then faded, leaving her very pale.

"Barbara," he said, anxiously, "I'd so like—I looked in to see your father——"

"He's dead," she said, her voice hoarse with pain. "It's why I'm here," she added, "to help mother see all father's affairs are straightened out."

"I'm sorry," he murmured. "I had a sudden wave of nostalgia for the Firm. It's years since I was here." He smiled, and added, "Would you ever serve me with a whisky, I wonder?"

She did not return his smile.

"Why not? It's a bar, isn't it?" She turned away to serve him.

"Ah, don't be like that!" he cried. "Haven't we both known pain enough? Are we in the habit with each other all our lives?"

She set the whisky in front of him and he reached for a drammer of water.

She said, with the old bitter passion, "I loved Conon. I still love him!"

"All right! I loved you—I still love you! Can't we help and comfort each other, for God's sake, now we're both alone and lonely and no longer young?"

They were alone in the bar, and she turned away from him to serve them. Brian swallowed his drink and went out. Barbara put the lad who helped in the shop in charge of the bar and went upstairs.

She told her mother, "When O'Mara was in. He's trying to wear me down again, after all these years!"

"Ah, God love him, the villain!" her mother

ried, her eyes filling with tears. "Why wouldn't he come up and see me?"

"I angered him and he went out. Why can't he leave me alone? Haven't he caused trouble enough in my life—in all our lives?"

"The poor fellow," her mother breathed.

Barbara moved impatiently.

"But for him Cousin would still be alive!"

"You're no right to say that!" Her mother's tone was sharp.

Barbara sat down, burying her face in her hands.

"Perhaps you're right," she said, heavily, after a moment. "I don't know. I don't know anything any more! Leave him here if you want to. It's your house."

Mrs. Mitchell went a message by the shop boy round to John in the hotel immediately—fearful that he might leave the place after Barbara's treatment of him.

"Tell Mr. O'Mara," she said, "that Mrs. Mitchell is asking for him and has been lovely about him this long time, and will be real kind to him in calling."

John, who had thought of driving back to Galway that evening, came round instead to see Barbara's mother. He found the old woman alone, and after a while they talked, inevitably, of Barbara and her tragedy. When he left Mrs. Mitchell, John felt sufficiently heartened to go down into the bar and order a drink from Barbara as a prelude to asking her to come for a drive with him in the morning.

"I want to talk to you," he said, "and," he added, smiling a little, "you owe it to me to listen."

"You want to try and wear me down again, is that it?"

"I want to try and melt the ice round your heart—
get it like that."

"It's the same thing."

"In effect—I hope so, anyhow!"

He smiled the old crooked charming smile. She sighed,
and exclaimed, ruefully, "All these years later we seem
to be back where we started, in Michael's bar!"

"A little wiser, perhaps," he suggested.

"Perhaps. We'll see."

"Then you'll come for a drive tomorrow?"

"Yes. I'll come. You played it with mother, didn't
you?"

"Sure, I did! Wouldn't it be a fine thing, now, for
an old lone widow-woman the like of herself to spend
the rest of her days in comfort with her married daughter
and son-in-law at O'Mara Castle?"

Barbara hardly knew whether to be angry or amused.

"So twenty-five years later you and my mother are
still in trouble about marrying one off to you?"

He laughed and drained his glass.

"Doesn't it show great manifestations of purpose?"

There seemed to her to be both vigour and
confidence in his voice.

"You're a terrible man, Stan O'Mara!" she told
him.

"We'll discuss all that tomorrow out at the rural
street. I'll call for you at three. . . ."

Before she went to bed that night Barbara looked up,
once again, the Grilene and Diamond story, and she
found that after Diamond had been killed by the wild
boar Finn caught out Grilene, greeting her with warm
words, and how she "awakening smiled her will for love

sharp-pointed dagger'. But, it seemed, 'Finn left not plying her with sweet words and with gentle loving allures until he brought her to his own will; and he had the desire of his heart and soul of her. And Finn and Ginevere slept by one another until they died.'

There was upon Barbara now, strongly, the sense of inevitability of which Terence had spoken. Now there could be no rejection of the pre-ordained parallel; on all points the pattern of the ancient legend had been worked out in her life and Clancy's and Brian's and Terence's. It had been God's will that Sean O'Mara should walk into Mitchell's Bar twenty-five years ago and find her, and it was no less His will that Sean should re-find her there for the completion of the divinely appointed design was real destiny.

This time Barbara was married in Ballymacross, and everyone in the place, it seemed, attended the nuptial Mass. Afterwards there were drinks for all guests in Mitchell's Bar, belated and garlanded for the occasion, then the bride left with her mother and her husband for O'Mara Castle.

Thereafter everyone said that Sean O'Mara had married the first time for money, the second time out of pity, and the third time for love. And what more natural, him the fine handsome man no more than thirty-five, looking a full score of years younger, and Barbara Clancy, that had been Barbara Mitchell, the rump side of fifty, with not a strand of grey to her fine red head, God love her—wasn't it happy for those back that by the grace of God they should come together in the end? And wasn't it great for the widowed Old One to be ending her days

S-E-S-T-R-Y

In a castle on a low island stocked with the cattle in the plains of Mesopotamia? Wasn't it a good ending to a tale that, when all was cold and dead, was only one as it were reviv'd from the ancient tale?

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